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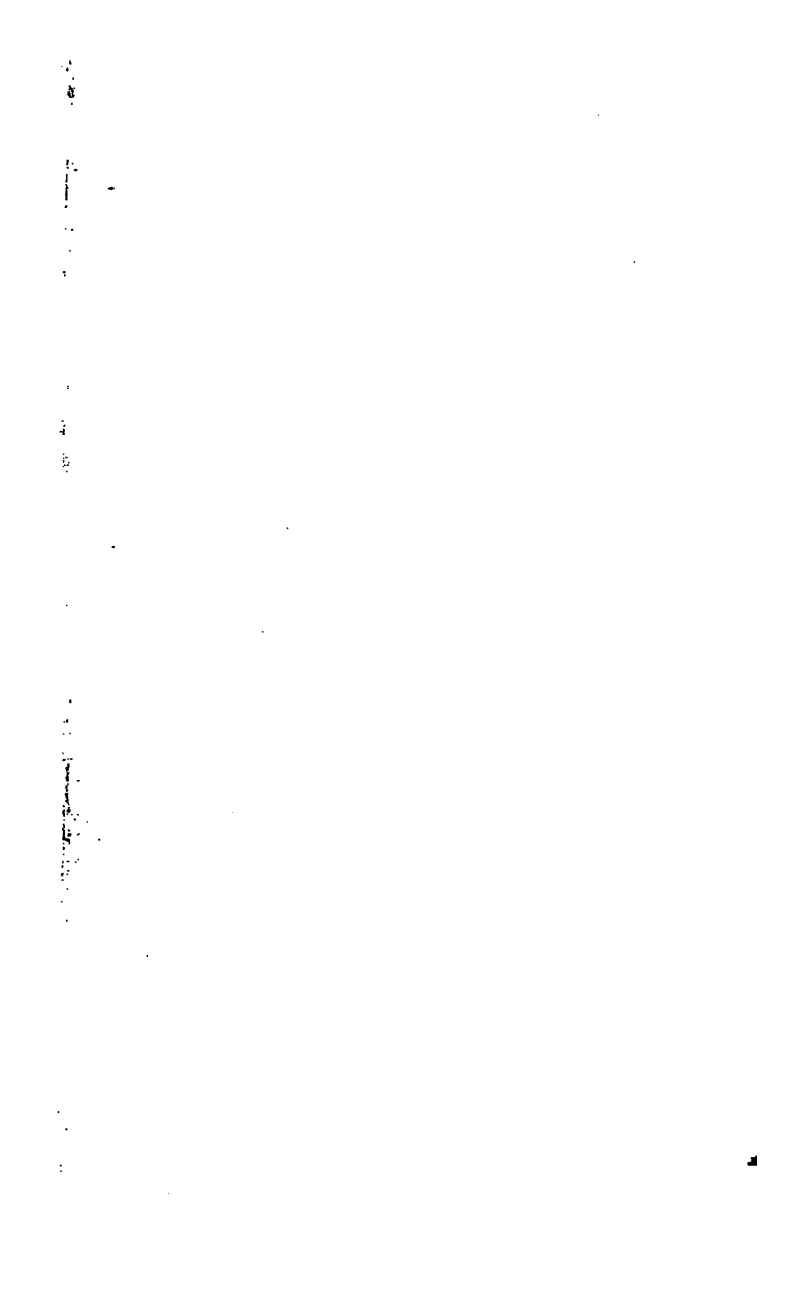
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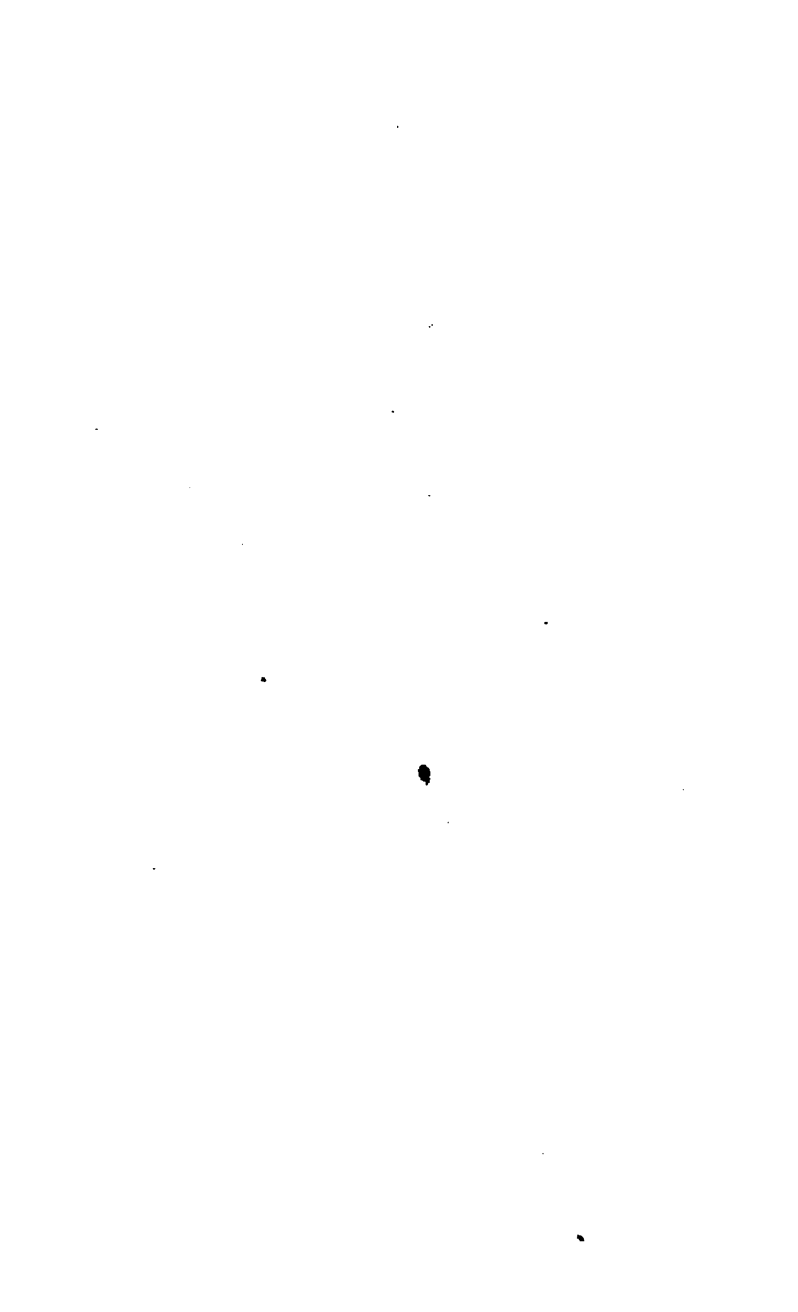




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DETACHED  
THOUGHTS AND APOPTHEGMS

EXTRACTED FROM  
SOME OF THE WRITINGS  
OF  
ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

---



“Invenies etiam disjecti membra poetæ.”

*Horace.*

“The perception of analogies—the exercise of that powerful abstraction which seizes the point of agreement in a number of otherwise, dissimilar individuals—it is in this that the greatest genius is shewn.”—*Bishop Copleston.*

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FIRST SERIES.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN presenting to the Public a collection of detached thoughts from the writings of Archbishop Whately, the Compiler would desire to remind the Reader, that the Author, from whose works this selection is made, is not one of those fragmentary writers who deal in insulated passages of wisdom and of wit, and resemble, as has been remarked, "Chinese painters, who represent each single object admirably, but have no perspective." His works, on the contrary, are all complete treatises, of which any short extracts can be but the mere shreds and parings; and consequently, it is only too obvious,



that as an exposition of his views, this, or any, collection of detached passages, must necessarily be altogether imperfect. Yet these treatises, though all specimens of close and consecutive reasoning, are so rich in comprehensive and suggestive maxims, in calm and lucid statements of great principles, and in the varied illustration of them by familiar examples, that the Compiler cannot but anticipate a favourable reception for a selection the design of which is to present in a small compass, and thus render more generally accessible, some of those pregnant principles and suggestive thoughts. Indeed, the Compiler cannot but feel, that whatever apology may be required for the work, is due not to the Public, but to the Author, whose thoughts, presented in this detached form, must be more or less injuriously affected by separation from the context.

This needed apology is now respectfully offered to him, together with grateful thanks for

the characteristic liberality with which permission to make a selection from his writings has been accorded. As the Author has no connexion with the publication, or even knowledge of the mode in which his permission has been made use of, the Compiler is alone responsible for all beyond that permission.

It remains only to add, that while the second series of the work consists of miscellaneous thoughts on a very great variety of subjects, the first division has been devoted to that most important of all subjects, the "Love of Truth in Religious Inquiry;" and the passages bearing upon it have been selected in very earnest hope that some of them might serve, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, to implant the precious germs of that desire for truth, for its own sake, which gives singleness of eye to perceive, and singleness of purpose to pursue it.

*November 1st, 1854.*



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(FIRST SERIES.)

DETACHED

# Thoughts and Apophthegms

ON THE

LOVE OF TRUTH IN RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY.

“If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”—*Matt.* vi. 22.



# THOUGHTS AND APOPTHEGMS.

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## I.

### Truth,

#### THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANITY.

---

THE question, "What is true?" ought to stand on the threshold of every religious enquiry.

If the question, "What is true," be asked only in the second place, it is likely to receive a very different answer from what it would, if it had been asked in the first place.

That which is true and right loses, incalculably, its beneficial effect on the mind, when received on any ground than *because* it is true and right.



Truth is, in such an especial manner, the characteristic of the religion of Christ, that, in our Lord's reply to Pilate, He points it out as defining the very nature of His kingdom, of His objects, and His claims:—"For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And when, on other occasions, asserting His claims, He says, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—"When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth."—"Sanctify them through thy Truth; thy word is Truth." Thus, too, the Apostles repeatedly use the words "Truth" and "Faith" to designate the Christian religion. It is Truth resting on evidence, and requiring Faith in it, on the ground of its truth.

The Christian religion made its appearance as the common disturber of the peace of the world, because it put an end to the tranquil influence of custom, authority, credulity, sentiment, and imagination; forced men upon the disagreeable task of examining evidence, searching records, and proving all things; and arrayed in opposite opinions, children against their parents, subjects against their princes, and the people against the priest.

Christianity, contrasted with the Jewish system of emblems, is Truth in the sense of reality, as substance is opposed to shadows; and, contrasted with the Heathen Mythology, is Truth as opposed to falsehood. "The truth as it is in Jesus" was to supersede the heathen idolatry, by destroying it; and "the Law and the Prophets," not by destroying indeed, but by fulfilling them.

The Heathen Mythology not only was not true, but was not even supported as true; it not only *deserved* no faith, but it *demande*d none. The very pretension to truth—the very demand of faith—were characteristic distinctions of Christianity.

To believe in Christianity, without knowing why we believe it, is not Christian faith but blind credulity.

The word knowledge, strictly employed, implies three things; viz., Truth, Proof, and Conviction.

To say that there is the more virtue in Christian Faith, the less it is founded on evidence, is to forget that the Lord Jesus Himself—He who "taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes"—He who said not, as the Prophets of old, men *sent*

from God, "Thus saith the Lord"—but, as Immanuel, God dwelling with His people, "*I say unto you,*"—appealed to His works as bearing witness of Him; and claimed the Divine "power to forgive sins," on the ground that He had the no less Divine power to bid the palsied cripple "take up his bed and walk."

The Apostles came forward rather in the character of witnesses, than as authoritative guides; and they work miracles and appeal to Scripture, not so much for the purpose of establishing their own right to deliver doctrines, as to *prove* the doctrines which they teach. And as with their first teaching, so also is it with the subsequent propagation of their religion. Though the Authors of the Gospels wrote, under the extraordinary superintendence of the Holy Spirit, those four distinct statements of evidence of matters of fact, yet it is not as the organs of inspiration they come forward. Their language is not, "Thus saith the Lord;" but, "He that *saw* it bare record." These things were "delivered unto us by those who, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." They have so shaped their writings as to avoid what the method of authority would require, and force forward what the method of examination would demand; and have

thus shewn pretty clearly their intention, that the religion which they preached upon the ground of evidence, should be maintained and propagated also upon the same ground. "These things"—says the Evangelist John, speaking of Christ's miracles, wrought in the presence of His disciples—"were written that ye might believe . . . and . . . believing ye might have life through His name."

It has been said by a modern writer, that "the poor ignorant uninstructed peasant who says, 'I believe my religion because I have been told so by those who are wiser and better than myself; my parents told me so, and the clergyman of the parish told me so,' *comes nearest to the answer of the Gospel*,"—to that answer which the apostle Peter directs us to be ready to give "to every one that asketh a reason for the hope that is in us." And yet it is manifest this answer could have been given, when the Gospel was first preached, by no *Christian*; but might be, and *was*, given by every one of his Pagan neighbours.

This is to represent the Apostles of Christ as saying to those of whom they would make converts, "Let every succeeding generation receive quietly the religion handed down by its fathers, but let *this* generation act otherwise. Take up *novelty* for this

once to oblige us, and ever after adhere to anti-quity."

He who professes adherence to the national religion of England, on the ground that "it is the religion of his fathers," forgets, as do the hearers who applaud the sentiment, that, on this principle, the worship of Thor and Woden would claim precedence.

In these our days, there are an immense number of persons, who, professing faith in the Gospel, and zeal for its support, yet assure us that enquiries into its evidences, are likely to lead to infidelity. What would such a person say of some professed friend coming forward as his advocate, and saying, "My friend here, is a veracious and worthy man, and there is no foundation for any of the charges brought against him; and his integrity is fully believed in by persons who thoroughly trust him, and who have never thought of reasoning or enquiring about his character at all; but, of all things, *do not make any investigation*, for the more you enquire and examine, the less likely most people will be to believe in his integrity!" Surely a man so defended would exclaim, "Deliver me from my friends, and I fear not my enemies."

Those who boldly stand out and court enquiry, and bring forward cogent reasons for their conviction, are reproached, by a certain modern writer, with infirm faith and timidity. Timidity of all things ! One is reminded of the story of some Indian savages serving as allies to the British in America, who, when the allied force was attacked by the enemy, ran and took shelter in the woods, while the British troops stood firm under a heavy fire, and repulsed the assailants. It was expected that their Indian friends would have been full of admiration at this display of superior valour ; but, on the contrary, their interpretation of it was, that the British soldiers were such cowards that they were *too much frightened to run away*. Almost every chapter of the New Testament convicts the Lord Jesus and His followers of that "timidity," in appealing to the evidence of miracles and prophecies, which is censured and derided.

The danger of decrying all appeal to evidence is not confined to a mere want of adequate evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, but something distinct from, and beyond, this; the danger, namely, of a contrary presumption arising. It is not merely, that men, to whom sufficient evidence has not been furnished, will be likely, themselves, to reject what

has not been proved to them; but that men of *all* classes—the learned as well as the unlearned—will be likely to regard it as a positive evidence against the religion, that it professes to be calculated for mankind in general, and designed to claim their rational belief, while its defenders themselves confess that the object cannot be accomplished.

To labour to prove a truth, is to imply the possibility of doubt, and to challenge inquiry; therefore an appeal to truth, as resting on evidence, is the characteristic of a true religion, which alone can satisfy doubts, or stand the test of enquiry.

The kingdom of truth the Lord came to establish, is a kingdom whose subjects should have been *admitted as such*, in consequence of their being “of the truth;” that is, not mere adherents of truth by accident, but *votaries* of truth. “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

He only is “of the truth” who, with reverential love, is seeking, in candour and simplicity, to learn God’s truth, and, in earnest self-devotion, to obey it at all seeming hazards; after the example of Him who “came into the world to bear witness unto the truth.”

## II.

### SOME OBSTACLES TO THE ATTAINMENT OF TRUTH, AND TO ITS PROGRESS IN THE WORLD.

---

#### I. INDIFFERENCE ABOUT TRUTH.

WHAT is the Truth? is the question to which all other questions should be postponed.

All men wish to have truth on their side; but few to be on the side of truth.

Some men, from supposing themselves to have *found* truth, take for granted that it was for truth they *were* seeking.

Men miss truth more often from their indifference about it, than from intellectual incapacity.



Many a man adduces on some subjects puerile fallacies, that are, perhaps, in reality no more *his own* than the sound arguments he employs on others; he has given an indolent, unthinking acquiescence to each, and has suffered his powers of thought to lie dormant, which, if he could be excited to exert, would be fully sufficient to enable him to distinguish the sound from the unsound.

There is a heresy of Indifference to revealed religion which is the most deadly of all heresies.

Some of the articles of belief, of the heresy of Indifference, are too readily and generally received—"all religions are true, and all equally true,"—"all religions profess to furnish revelations respecting the Deity and the world to come,"—"all religions have their Priest and their Priestcraft,"—"all religions teach piety towards some Divine Being, and inculcate moral conduct." And this creed is wound up with—

"For modes of faith, let senseless bigots fight;  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

And yet, in every one of the points, in respect of which all religions will have been thus indiscriminately thrown together, the patient and diligent inquirer will perceive, that Christianity does, in fact, stand eminently distinguished from all the rest. It

bears only that superficial and general resemblance to them, which a genuine coin does to its various counterfeits.

The depreciation of Christianity by Indifferentism is a more insidious and less curable evil than infidelity itself. For he who denies the whole of it, but who yet acknowledges the importance, if true, of what he rejects, may, at least, be brought to attend to the arguments in favour of it: but far less corrigible is the error of him, who, confounding Christianity with all the systems which human fraud or folly have devised, or, at best, regarding it as a mere authoritative confirmation of Natural Religion, looks upon the whole system with indifference, as a thing needed, perhaps, for the vulgar, but which the educated and intelligent might very well have dispensed with, and about which they need not much concern themselves.

The study of Natural Religion ought properly to follow, or at least to accompany, not to precede, that of Revelation.

The Gospel has exercised a powerful, though an unacknowledged, and, perhaps, an unperceived, influence, even on the minds of those who reject it; they

have drunk at that stream of knowledge, which they cannot, or will not, trace up to the real source from which it flows.

To dress up a system with the spoils of revelation, to call it Natural Religion, and then to make it a standard by which to interpret the declarations of Scripture, is, in fact, to correct an original, from an incorrect and imperfect transcript.

To attribute to Natural Religion what Revelation alone can furnish, is to confound Christianity with the various systems of philosophical speculation or popular superstition, in careless blindness to the splendid characteristics which distinguish it from them all. The star which stands over the holy Infant at Bethlehem has no fellow in the firmament.

If the Jews be justly condemned, who crucified our Lord "between two thieves"—thus "numbering with the transgressors" of the vilest kind, the only Man who never transgressed—it is awful to think what account those will have to render at the last day, who vilify His religion, by confounding it with the grossest systems of human imposture, not only in the very points in which the two are different,

but in those points in which they are absolutely contrasted.

The pursuit of religious truth is the noblest, as it is the most important pursuit, in which any human being can be engaged.

He who either cares not to be a lover of truth, or takes for granted that he is such, without taking any pains to acquire the habit, is not likely ever to acquire it.

Men first make up their minds—and the smaller the mind the sooner made up—and then seek for reasons, and if they chance to stumble upon a good reason, of course they do not reject it. But though they are right, they are right only by chance.

Man is naturally more desirous of a quiet and approving, than of a vigilant and tender conscience, more desirous of *security* than of *safety*.

Many a man who is extravagantly imagining that he can purchase repose for his soul in a future life, is in reality seeking for the repose of his soul in *this life*.

In the great day of judgment, each man will not

only see his Judge, but he will also see himself, which none *can* do perfectly at present, and which few endeavour to do at all.

Men are apt to overlook the possible high practical importance of thinking rightly on a point which has in *itself* no practical tendency.—The opinion so harmless, however groundless, that in the resurrection, all the same particles of matter which belong to our bodies now, must be brought together and reunited, has left an opening for the cavils of irreligious scoffers. Yet the illustration which Paul employs is that of a seed sown, and this alone is sufficient to refute the error. For we raise from a seed, not the same thing that was sown, but a plant which is very different. “Thou sowest *not* that which shall be, but bare grain,”—that is, mere seed—“but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him.”

According to the proverb, which Lord Bacon has somewhere alluded to, “Nettle roots sting not,” the first entrance of some false principle, or of some usurped power, is generally in reference to something, in itself, either harmless or else unimportant; and when the root has once got possession of the soil, it will afterwards send up stronger and stronger shoots.

To be blind to the unsoundness of a principle till it produces *actually* all the ill effects that it can consistently lead to, is not to perceive which way the wind is blowing unless it blows a perfect gale.

A self-evident and apparently insignificant truth, admitted under the guise of a truism, has not seldom been converted into a dogma of fearful importance. When the wooden horse has been introduced, it is found to contain armed men concealed within it.

The simplest and most obvious truth, is worth setting forth, that it may clear away some of the fallacies, which, scattered at random, cause impediments in the enquirer's path to truth; even as the wreaths of snow, tossed about fortuitously by the blind fury of the winds, may form serious obstructions in the roads.

Those who on each occasion watched the motions, and registered the times of occultation, of Jupiter's satallites, little thought, perhaps, themselves, what important results they were preparing the way for. Hence, Bacon urges us to pursue truth, without always requiring to perceive its practical application.

Men often speak contemptuously of over exactness

## 16 OBSTACLES TO THE ATTAINMENT OF TRUTH,

—of attending to minute and subtle distinctions ; while these minute distinctions are exactly those which call for careful attention in all who *would* escape, or detect, error. It is for want of attention to minute points, that houses are robbed and set on fire. Burglars do not, in general, come and batter down the front door ; but climb in at some window whose fastenings have been neglected ; and an incendiary, or a careless servant, does not kindle a tar barrel in the middle of a room, but leaves a lighted turf, or a candle snuff, in the thatch or in a heap of shavings.

No truth should be deemed not worth maintaining, nor an unsound principle thought too insignificant to be worth refuting, because no longer needed for establishing some particular conclusion. The time when the need is not pressing, is the very time to provide ourselves with such firm-fixed and right principles as may avail in time of need, and to destroy the roots of those theoretical errors, which may be torpid, yet ready to vegetate as soon as the season is favourable to them. When the storm is in its fury, it may be too late to drop the anchor.

It is not enough to believe what you maintain, you must maintain what you believe ; and maintain it, because you believe it.

## II. DREAD OF THE PROGRESS OF TRUTH.

To dread danger from the progress of any truth, physical, moral, or religious, is to manifest a want of faith in God's power, or, in His will to maintain His own cause.

Falsehood, like the dry-rot, flourishes the more in proportion as air and light is excluded.

Truths dangerous indeed ; Yes—and so are meat and drink ; but who will therefore resolve to perish with hunger ?

Unless the people can be kept in total darkness, it is the wisest way for the advocates of truth to give them full light.

Those are narrow prejudices which would set science and religion in array against each other, and the practical consequence, the making them indeed adverse, though easy to be foreseen, is often overlooked in practice. If the efforts, formerly made by a bigotted hierarchy, to represent the cultivation of astronomy as opposed to religion, had proved successful, and consequently no Christian had been an astronomer, the result produced by them-



selves, viz., that no astronomer would have been a Christian, would have been triumphantly appealed to in justification of their censures.

In the Middle Ages, Grammar ("Gramarye") was regarded as a kind of magic art.

Those who avow their dread of the pursuit of knowledge of any kind, as likely to be injurious to the cause of religion, forget that the acknowledgment of such a feeling, or even a bare suspicion of its existence, does more harm to that cause, than all the assaults of its adversaries. However sincere their own belief may, in fact, be, the impression will inevitably be excited, that it is not so; that they secretly distrust the goodness of their cause; and are desirous, from some sinister motive, of keeping up a system of delusion, by suppressing the free exercise of reason. For truth can never be at variance with truth; discoveries in astronomy, for example, in chemistry, or in geology, may indeed be totally unconnected with religious truths, but can never contradict them. To this it is replied, that it is not truth, but specious falsehood, not real, but pretended discoveries, that are dreaded. But this falsehood should be refuted, and these alleged discoveries tested, by an appeal to such data as our natural powers of reason supply; not by an appeal

to the Scriptures save as an ancient book ; not in reference to their sacred character, in short, not *as* Scripture. We ought to employ Scripture for its own purpose, which is to reveal to us religious and moral truths. It is for us to “behave ourselves valiantly for our country and for the cities of our God,” instead of bringing the ark of God into the field of battle to fight for us.

The truths of Religion ought not to be rested on any decision respecting questions belonging to the Natural-philosopher, or the Metaphysician ; nor our hopes in God’s promises be mixed up with debates about Extension, and Gravitation, and Form.

It is often said, that though it may be well for learned and skilful Divines to have the objections to Christianity placed before them, yet that it is better not to notice objections *generally*, for fear of alarming and unsettling the minds of plain unlearned people, who had, probably, never heard of any thing of the kind. Now, many persons, who have never heard any thing distinct on the subject, have heard, and are made uneasy by, vague reports and obscure rumours of objections, made by some supposed learned men, who have proceeded on “*rational*” grounds, without knowing distinctly what they are ; when, perhaps,

if these objections were clearly stated to them, they are qualified, by their own plain sense, to perceive how irrational they are. Suppose you were startled in a dark night, by something that looked like a spectre in a winding-sheet, would not he who should bring a lantern, and shew you that it was nothing but a white cloth hanging on a bush, give you far better encouragement, than he who merely exhorted you to "look another way, keep up your heart, whistle and pass on."

Those who censure the endeavours to enlighten the adherents of some erroneous Churches, on the ground, that many of them have thence become atheists, and many, fanatics, forget that this is a probable and natural result, of the pernicious effects upon the mind, of any system of blind, uninquiring, acquiescence, and that therefore to censure the casting out of that evil spirit, which such a system is, would be to condemn the cure of the man possessed with a demon, who, as might have been expected, cruelly rent and mangled the victim, as it came out of him, and left him half dead at its departure.

It is well known that the great doctrines of Justification by faith, and of Spiritual Influence, have been often and grievously perverted. Yet, this per-

version is no argument for neglect of them; not only, because neglect of any doctrine, is no less an evil than the abuse of it, but, because the very best security against that abuse, is to preach the doctrine, in its genuine and uncorrupted form. In the vast Savannahs of America, travellers are often, it is said, threatened with destruction from fires, which having been kindled, by some accident, among the luxuriant but sun-scorched vegetation, spread before the wind, with a rapidity which precludes all hope of escape by flight. Their only resource, when thus pursued by the conflagration, is to kindle the grass before them; and thus leave the flame which follows them no fuel to sustain it.

We are told in *The Spectator*, that when Sir Roger de Coverley first came to his estate, the good knight found three parts of his house altogether useless. The best room had the reputation of being haunted; noises had been heard in another; and his mother had had several chambers shut up, in which deaths, or other disagreeable events, had occurred. In this manner, his habitation was reduced to so small a compass, that he found himself almost shut out of his own house. This story presents itself to my mind, when I see men, without sufficient reason, abandoning part of their rightful possession of Chris-

tian doctrine ; and confining themselves to a narrow range of Scripture truth.

There may be danger attendant on every truth, since, there is none that may not be perverted by some, or, that may not give offence to others ; but, in the case of anything which plainly appears to be truth, every danger must be braved. We must maintain the truth as we have received it, and trust to Him who is "the Truth" to prosper and defend it.

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### III. BIAS OF JUDGMENT.

INDIFFERENCE of the *will*, and indifference of the judgment, are two very distinct things that are often confounded.

To wish to find truth on one side rather than the other, is natural and often wise ; but to *think* that true which we wish, and merely *because* we wish it, is always an undeniable folly.

The confusion in some men's minds between truth and reality—between the report of a thing which might be either true or false, and the thing reported,

which either is, or is not, is exhibited in the way in which men believe or disbelieve, not with a view to the truth, or falsity of what is said, but according as it is favourable or unfavourable to their wishes,—“Prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy unto us deceits.” A similar confusion makes men dislike the messenger of evil, as if he brought upon them the evil, instead of merely bringing them the knowledge of it.

As any one may bring himself to believe almost anything that he is inclined to believe, it makes all the difference whether we *begin or end* with the enquiry, “What is truth?”

There should be an endeavour to preserve the indifference of the *judgment*, even in cases where the *will* cannot, and should not, be indifferent.

The judgment is like a pair of scales, and evidences like the weights; but the will holds the balances in its hand; and even a slight jerk will be sufficient, in many cases, to make the lighter scale appear the heavier.

Men are too apt to ask, as the first question, not how far each doctrine is agreeable to *Scripture*, but

to *themselves*; not whether it is conformable to God's will, but to their own.


When comparing opinions or practices with the standard of God's word, we must beware, lest we suffer these opinions or practices to *bend the rule* by which they are to be measured.

Some persons follow the dictates of their conscience, only in the same sense in which a coachman may be said to follow the horses he is driving.

It makes all the difference, whether we pursue a certain course *because we judge* it right; or judge it to be right *because we pursue* it.

There are two objects which he who seeks is almost sure to find—the one is, the knowledge of what he ought to do—the other, an excuse for what he is inclined to do.

Inclination, when suffered to bias the judgment in embracing conclusions, acts like the magnet said to have been once secretly placed near a ship's compass by a traitor, who, purposing to deliver the crew into the enemy's hands, thus made all their diligence and skill only serve to further them in the wrong course.



There is no absurdity so gross which men will not readily admit, if it appears to favour a conclusion of which they are already convinced. Even a candid and sensible man, is not unlikely to be misled by this, to use arguments which would never have convinced himself, had he not been convinced before ; and are not likely to convince others, but rather (by the operation of the converse fallacy) to *confirm* in their dissent those who before disagreed with him.

It is not only the outward profession, but the real convictions of the judgment, that are liable to be biassed by the influence of interest, party spirit, or other improper motives. "A gift," as the Scriptures express it, "blinds the eyes." Sincerity, in this sense, accordingly—(not that kind which consists in the exercise of an unbiassed judgment, earnestly and *sincerely* endeavouring to ascertain what is true, and which is justly regarded as so commendable a quality that many and great errors are reckoned pardonable, in proportion as a man possesses it ;) but sincerity in the sense of unfeigned persuasion that wrong is right, and truth falsehood—is described by the great moralist of antiquity as the last stage of corruption.

• According to the Hindoo Law, the penalty denounced against a particular crime is remitted only



in case of the inducement to its commission being the present of an elephant; that being considered a *douceur* too magnificent for any one to be expected to refuse. Now, in Europe, though an actual elephant is not the very thing that offers the strongest temptation, there is in most people's conscience something analogous to it, and different things are "elephants" to different people. It is well for every man to be on the look out, each for his own "elephant."

When people have resolved to shut their eyes, or to look only on one side, it is of little consequence how good their eyes may be.

Men make up their minds before-hand, and assume, with regard to any reasons brought before them, the office, not of a judge, but of an advocate, who aims at drawing out of each witness, whatever he can that favours his own side, and cushioning all that makes against him. Thus many a reader of the Bible reads it through coloured glasses.

The generality of men are not so much accustomed to pursue this or that course, in consequence of their previous conviction that it is right, as to believe that it is right, because they have been accustomed to pursue it.

It is one thing to pray that we may learn *what is right*; and another thing to pray that we may *find ourselves in the right*.

The more easy of belief any one is, in respect of what falls in with his wishes or preconceived notions, the harder of belief he will be, of anything that opposes them :—therefore the testimony of the early disciples of Jesus is even the stronger from their prejudices all running counter to their testimony.

If men will consult the Scriptures, as Balaam enquired of God, with a secret bias; not acquiescing at once in the Divine decision but trying once more “what the Lord will say,” they will, like him, be indulged in finding something more conformable to their sinful wish; even as Balaam, on his second application, received permission to “go with the men,” and yet “the Lord’s anger was kindled against him because he went.”

Into whatever opinions or conduct men are led by any human propensities, they seek to defend and justify them by the best arguments they can frame; and then, assign (as they often do in perfect sincerity) these arguments as the cause of their adopting such notions, whereas they are in reality the effect.

Thus the chance (however small it may be) of rectifying their errors, is diminished. For, if these be in reality traceable to some deep-seated principle of our nature, as soon as one false foundation on which they have been placed is removed, another will be substituted ; as soon as one theory is proved untenable, a new one will be devised in its place. Thus, arguments, even the strongest and the clearest, will usually prove too weak to overthrow the "Idols of the Race" (*idola tribus*) as Bacon calls them :—the errors springing out of man's nature.

It is only through the enlightening and supporting grace of the Holy Spirit, that the Scriptures themselves can be consulted with advantage.

While carefully guarding against the judgment being biassed by inclination, it should not be forgotten that it is a great mistake, and one that leads to important practical error, to assume that all people believe what they wish for. It is quite as often the reverse: thus, we find men sometimes "believing not for joy" something which they feel a strong desire for ; and again, sometimes tormented with groundless alarms of something which they much dread ; with excessive doubt in cases where their wishes are

strong,—and morbid distrust of evidence which they are especially anxious to find conclusive. The proverbial expression of “too good news to be true,” bears witness to the existence of this feeling.

Some writers disparage the judgment of those who have been accustomed to study and to teach the Christian Religion, and who derive hope and satisfaction from it, on the ground that they must wish to find it true; and yet the very same writers pass by the strong testimony, afforded on the same principle, by the multitudes who admit the truth of Christianity, though they have every reason to wish it untrue—as being to them a source of uneasiness and dismay.

A conclusion may be safely adopted, though in accordance with inclination, provided it be not *founded* upon it.

The proper office of candour is to prepare the mind, not, for the *rejection* of all evidence, but for the right reception of evidence; not, to be a substitute for reasons, but, to enable us *fairly* to weigh the reasons on both sides. To say otherwise is, in fact, to argue, that since just weights *alone*, without a just balance, will avail nothing, therefore, we have only to take

care of the scales, and let the weights take care of themselves.

Declamations are current in the present day against the iniquity of giving a bias to the minds of young persons, by teaching them our own interpretation of the sacred volume, instead of leaving them to investigate for themselves; that is, against endeavouring to place them in the same situation with those to whom those very Scriptures were written; instead of leaving them to struggle with difficulties which the Scriptures nowhere contemplate nor provide against. The maintainers of such a principle would do well to consider, whether it would not, if consistently pursued, prove too much. Do you not, it might be asked, bias the minds of children by putting into their hands the Scriptures themselves, as the infallible word of God? If you are convinced that they are so, you must be sure that they will stand the test of unprejudiced inquiry. Are you not, at least, bound in fairness to teach them at the same time, the systems of ancient mythology, the doctrines of the Koran, and those of modern philosophers, that they may freely choose amongst all? Let any one who is disposed to deride the absurdity of such a proposal, consider whether there is any objection to it, which would not equally lie against the exclusion of

systematic religious instruction, or indeed systematic training in any science or art. It would follow from this principle, that no physician should be trusted who is not utterly indifferent whether his patient recovers or dies, and wholly free from any favourable hope from the mode of treatment pursued.

The more awfully important any question is, the greater is the call for a rigid investigation of what may be urged on both sides; that the decision may be made on sound, rational, and Scriptural grounds, and not according to the dictates of excited feelings and imagination.

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#### IV. AVERSION TO DOUBT, AND UNNECESSARY DELAY IN DECISION.

AN aversion to doubt—a dislike of having the judgment kept in suspense, combined with indolence in investigation, induces the great mass of mankind to *make up their minds* on a variety of points, not one of which they have been enabled thoroughly to examine.

Men, in thinking only of what they are running from, forget what they are running towards.

He who does not in all cases prefer doubt to the reception of falsehood, or to the admission of any conclusion on insufficient evidence, is no lover of truth, nor in the right way to attain it in any point.

There is no right faith in believing what is true, unless we believe it *because* it is true.

Men grow impatient at the doubts and difficulties which beset the operations of the understanding. But if errors spring from its imperfection, is it not a strange remedy to quicken its too hurried pace, and limit its too narrow powers? Would any choose a clerk in money matters, who, puzzled by a long and intricate calculation, and uncertain, after all his care, of having escaped error, should boldly efface the sum total, and put down such a result as ought in his opinion to be correct? Such is the theory and practice of what is sadly miscalled Faith in many minds. Like Jack (in Swift's profane pasquinade) they have mused so long on the imperfections of eye-sight and the mischief of optical illusions, that they resolve to shut their eyes entirely, or, at least, never to venture out in daylight.

And a man, when in doubt between two opposing  
to act as if certain, is often as wise as it

is necessary ; but to say to a man "*Because* you are in doubt, believe without any doubt, for this is safest for you," must always be absurd. Yet the pretence of the greatest safety to be found in a Church demanding implicit and undoubting belief in all it teaches, even though it were to teach that black is white, is what catches unthinking persons more than anything else.

Men may succeed in saving themselves from actual doubt, without delivering themselves from reasons for doubt.

To take refuge from the morbid dread of uncertainty in an authority, while wilfully blind to its doubtfulness, is, to save, as it were, the ship from being driven about, at the mercy of winds and currents, by casting anchor on an object which is itself floating.

To reject one side of a question on perceiving that it involves great difficulties, and to embrace the other side of the alternative, without staying to examine whether there are more or fewer on that other side, is as if a traveller, when he had the choice of two roads, should, immediately on perceiving that there are impediments on the one, decide on taking



the other, before he had ascertained whether it were even passable.

It is a common practice to decide at once against any measure that may appear in itself objectionable, in cases where there is, perhaps, nothing but a choice of difficulties before us; as when the throwing, for example, of a valuable cargo into the sea, is the only mode left of saving the ship.

A choice of difficulties seems a necessary condition of human affairs. For it perpetually happens, in every department of life, that there will be objections, greater or less, to each of any possible courses before us. And yet, many intelligent persons sit down quite satisfied that they have proved their point when they have shewn the grave objections to one course, without at all noticing those that lie against all the others; and without perceiving that they are in the condition alluded to in the Roman proverb, "*Lupum auribus teneo*;" when it is difficult and hazardous to keep one's hold, and eminently hazardous to let it go.

Suspension of judgment, so often urged, as long as there are reasons on both sides, is practically, since there always will be reasons on both sides, the very same thing as a *decision in favour of the existing*

*state* of things. "Not to resolve is to resolve." Happy it is for mankind, that, in many of the most momentous concerns of life, their decision is generally formed for them, by external circumstances ; which thus saves them, not only from the perplexity of doubt and the danger of delay, but also from the pain of regret ; since we acquiesce much more cheerfully in that which is unavoidable.

The main, and almost the universal, fallacy of Antichristians is, in shewing that there are objections against Christianity, and thence inferring that it should be rejected ; when that which ought to have been proved is, that there are *more* or *stronger* objections against the receiving than the rejecting of it. At the first announcement of the Gospel, when Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the promised Deliverer, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, the burden of proof lay with Him. No one could be fairly called on to admit His pretensions, till He shewed cause for believing in Him. If "He had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." Now the case is reversed, and the religion exists, that is the phenomenon ; those who will not allow it to have come from God, are bound to solve it on some other hypothesis less open to objections. Infidels, when sup-

posing it to have been a human contrivance, not established by miracles, are bound to give an explanation of the still greater miracle—its having arisen and prevailed as it did, in defiance of all opposition—forcing men of all ranks and of all nations to disown the gods of their ancestors, and to adore a Jewish peasant, who had been cut off by the most ignominious death. This explanation they have never given, though they have had 1800 years to try; and thus they have tacitly confessed, that no hypothesis can be devised which will not be open to greater objections than lie against Christianity.

There may be objections which none can answer, and others which the unlearned cannot, of themselves, be expected at once to answer, against conclusions which, yet, may be fairly established by a preponderance of evidence; by positive proofs that have more force than the objections, even if left unanswered. "There are objections," said Dr. Johnson, "against a plenum, and objections against a vacuum; but one of them must be true."

Disbelieving is believing; since to disbelieve any assertion is to believe its contradictory; and whoever does this on slight grounds is both credulous

and incredulous; these being, in fact, one and the same habit of mind. This, though self-evident, is frequently lost sight of, owing to the employing in reference to the Christian religion the words, "Believer and unbeliever;" whence, unthinking persons are led to take for granted, that the rejection of Christianity implies less easy belief than its reception. Whereas, in reality, the infidel shews greater credulity than the Christian. The Christian believes that miracles took place in the setting up of Christianity, but assigns a sufficient *cause* for those wonderful events—namely, the Almighty power of God; and a sufficient *reason* for His exertion of that power—namely, to attest a divine Revelation. They, on the contrary, suppose that all the best established laws of the human mind were violated; and that men, in this one case, acted differently from the way in which they act in every other, while yet they are unable to assign any probable cause, or any specious reason for such an astounding miracle. And no one should make a boast of his "incredulity" in disbelieving something that is very strange, while he is believing, as the only alternative, something incomparably more strange.

Divine Providence seems to have designed that men should not be forced into belief of Revelation,

by evidence which, like that of geometrical demonstration, should leave no distinction between the well-disposed and the ill-disposed.

Three great requisites for decision are within the reach of ordinary men, as well as of the most learned and able. (1.) A sincere desire to attain Truth in order to regulate opinions and conduct by it alone; (2.) pure moral principle; and (3.) attentive study and calm inquiry. Do not be in a hurry to form an opinion, but do not unnecessarily put it off. Do not decide without inquiry, but do not, in order to avoid deciding, omit inquiry.

Some men see no medium between a claim to infallibility on the one hand, and universal hesitation—absolute scepticism—on the other. An appeal to the common sense which every man exercises on *all but religious* subjects, might be sufficient to prove, not only the absurdity of this reasoning, but their own conviction of its absurdity. Sensible men, every-day, decide questions in Medicine, in Agriculture, in Navigation, with sufficient confidence for all practical purposes, yet without holding themselves to be infallible.

A confident expectation that no argument *will* be

adduced that will change our opinions, is very different from a *resolution* that none ever *shall*. We may *print* but not stereotype our opinions.

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He that is not open to conviction, is not qualified for discussion.

We must always think our opinions are right; but not think our opinions are right always.

Misgive that you may not mistake.

Though not always called upon to *condemn* ourselves, it is always safe to *suspect* ourselves.

As a consciousness of peccability in moral conduct leads us to utter with sincerity the words, "who can tell how oft he offendeth? Oh! cleanse Thou me from my secret faults,"—the consciousness of peccability in judgment should make us equally ready to add, "who can tell how oft he mistaketh?"

To examine and re-examine—to reason and reflect—to hesitate and decide with caution,—to be always open to evidence,—and to acknowledge that after all we are liable to error;—all this is unacceptable to the human mind—both to its diffidence and to its

pride;—to its indolence, its dread of anxious cares—and to its love of self-satisfied and confident repose.

As the skilful and cautious navigator incurs no risk from hoping that the reckoning he carefully keeps will prove correct, so long as he never so far trusts to it as not to “keep a look out,” and to “take an observation” when opportunity offers; so, the earnest and diligent seeker after Truth who acts on his convictions as if he were certain of their being correct, and examines and re-examines the grounds of them, as if he suspected them of being erroneous, need not fear, but that in proportion as he is watchfully and prayerfully on his guard against the unseen current of passions and prejudices which is ever tending to drive him out of the right course, in the same degree will he succeed in attaining all necessary religious truths. For this self distrust, this perpetual care, and diligent watchfulness, and openness to conviction, are so far from necessarily implying a state of painful and unceasing doubt, that as they furnish the best safe-guard against error, so they afford the best grounds for a cheering hope of having attained truth. For, as long as the lover of Truth exercises this caution,—so long as he is open to enquiry and incessantly ready to try every religious question by Scripture

and by reason,—so long he will have been making that use of all his advantages, natural and supernatural, which Divine wisdom evidently designed : so long, he will have been doing his utmost to conform to the will of God ; and so long, consequently, he shall have the better reason for cherishing an humble hope that He, “the Spirit of Truth,” is, and will be, with him, to enlighten his understanding, to guide his conduct, and to lead him onwards to that state in which Faith shall be succeeded by sight, and Hope, by enjoyment.

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#### V. DESIRE OF A SUPPOSED HAPPY MEDIUM.

It is a truism, but one often practically forgotten, that there is no medium between truth and falsehood.

The golden mean, and avoiding of extremes, upon which some pride themselves may be but an attempt to *stop short between the premises and the conclusion* ;—a medium between *the abandonment of a false principle* and the adoption of *all* its legitimate consequences.

The real medium of rectitude is not to be attained by geometrical measurement. The varieties of hu-



man error have no power to fix the exact place of truth. On the contrary, it happens in respect of religion, as well as in all other subjects, that each one of two parties will maintain some things that are perfectly true and right, and others that are wholly wrong and mischievous : and that, in other points again, the one party or the other, will be much the more remote from the truth. So that any-one who studies to keep himself in every point just *half-way between* two contending parties, will probably be as often in the wrong as either of them.

The vulgar are apt to conclude that where a great deal is said, *something* must be true : and adopting that lazy contrivance for saving the trouble of thinking, splitting the difference, imagine they shew a laudable caution in believing *only part* of what is said. This is to be as simple as the clown who thinks he has bought a great bargain of a Jew, because he has beat down the price from a guinea to a crown for some article that is not really worth a groat.

One may often hear it observed that there is a *great deal of truth* in what such a one has said : i. e., perhaps it is *all true except one essential point*.

weak, the uncandid, and the unthinking

often congratulate themselves on having attained that happy medium between opposite extremes in which, they have been told, wisdom consists; while they have only attained the mimic wisdom of sliding alternately into each extreme; and instead of being led by neither party, are actually being led by *both*. A man whose orbit is really independent, will find it coincide in what astronomers call Nodes—sometimes with one, and sometimes with another orbit.

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## VI. THE LOVE OF SYSTEM.

THERE is no more common error in many departments of study, and especially in Theology, than the prevalence of a love of *system* over the love of *truth*. Men are often so much captivated by the aspect of what seems to them a regular, beautiful, and well-connected theory, as to adopt it hastily, without inquiring in the outset how far it is conformable to facts, or to Scriptural authority; and thus, often on one or two passages of Scripture, have built up an ingenious and consistent scheme, of which the far greater part is a tissue of their own reasonings and conjectures.

The love of system leads to a confounding of the

essential and important, with what is, in reality, totally unconnected with it. The whole system of faith of some, may be compared to some of the ancient compound medicines, of great efficacy and value, though cumbered with several drugs that are utterly inert. Many practitioners, unskilled in analysis, cannot conceive but that the success with which the compound is often administered, is a proof of the efficacy of each ingredient, and of the absurdity of thinking to separate them.

The mode in which theological knowledge is too commonly taught, is from uninspired writers, who *interweave* indeed, in their works much of Scripture, but make this rather *a commentary on their system*, than the basis and substratum on which they are to comment. They are apt to make a human system the *warp* instead of the *woof*; whereas the proper course would be to reverse that procedure—to take Scripture as the warp, and interweave their own remarks, explanations and applications.

The more the Scriptures are viewed in the light of a regularly formed philosophic system, the greater will be the disposition to find in them a regular technical vocabulary; for any system appears the more complete and distinct from all others, when provided

with a distinct, regular, technical phraseology, like a corporate body, with its coat of arms and motto.

The adhering too closely to any fixed set of expressions, in religious discussions, has a tendency to deaden men's attention to the *things* signified ; and, by leading them to mistake words for things, to lay the foundation of erroneous theories. The Sacred Writers aimed at no philosophical regularity of language, and the terms used by them are to be understood, not according to a precise, scientific definition, but each with reference to the context of the place where it is found.

The technical terms of the various systems of philosophical theology, are more numerous than those of almost any science, and were in many instances taken from the sacred writers—*taken* from them, in *every* sense of the phrase ; since hardly any theologian confined himself to *their* use of the terms. The *materials* indeed, are the stones of the Temple : but the building constructed with them is a fabric of human contrivance.

A regular compact system of theology, professedly compiled from Scripture, tends to foster that neglect of the study of Scripture, that averseness to labour

in the investigation of truth,—that indolent, uninquiring acquiescence in what is ready prepared for acceptance in the lump,—to which man is by nature so much disposed; and which the structure of the Christian Scriptures seems to have been expressly designed to guard against, by requiring that one passage should be compared with another, and instruction elicited from scattered, oblique, and incidental references to various doctrines.

The arguments and systems which have been reared by words mistaken for things, remind one of the fog-banks, which, at sea, so often delude the anxious mariner; he fancies himself within view of new coasts with promontories, and bays, and mountains distinctly discernible; but a nearer approach, and a more steady observation, prove the whole to be but an unsubstantial vapour, ready to melt away into air, and vanish for ever.

The lover of Truth without any bias in favour of any theory, however ingenious and consistent, must “prove all things and hold fast that which is good;”—and must admit no conclusion which is not itself, as well as the premises it is drawn from, agreeable to the Word of God. “Sir,” (said one of the most eminent of the Reformers) “I dare speak no further,

yea, almost none otherwise than as the Scripture doth as it were lead me by the hand."

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## VII. DREAD OF THE CHARACTER OF INCONSISTENCY.

The dread of *Inconsistency* must never be suffered to swallow up the dread of *error*.

It is mere idle declamation about consistency, to represent it as a disgrace to a man to confess himself wiser to day than yesterday. There is no inconsistency at all in declaring that we have seen reason to alter our opinion. The term should be confined to a man's holding, expressly or impliedly, contrary opinions at the same time, or, as the phrase is, "looking one way and rowing another."

A man is often charged with inconsistency for accommodating his judgment or his conduct to the circumstances before him, as the mariner sets his sails to the wind; though in many instances the inconsistency would be in the opposite proceeding,—in *not* shifting the sails when the wind changes.

As every man, who is not infallible, is liable to some errors, he virtually lays claim to infallibility,

who prides himself on his consistency, on the ground of resolving never to change his opinions or plans; unless, indeed, he qualifies that claim by proclaiming himself either too dull to detect his mistakes, or too obstinate to own them.

Many a man is censured as inconsistent, whom it would be more proper to characterize as fickle and unsteady.

It is much easier to boast of consistency than to preserve it. For as in the dark, or in a fog, adverse troops may take post near each other without mutual recognition, and consequently without contest, but as soon as daylight comes the weaker gives place to the stronger; so, in a misty and darkened mind, the most incompatible opinions may exist together without any perception of their discrepancy, till the understanding becomes sufficiently enlightened to enable the man to reject the less reasonable opinions, and retain the opposites.

To censure a man as inconsistent when he alters his course of proceeding, his language, his opinions, &c., in conformity with a change of circumstances, is to censure him for that which *must* be continually practised by every one who is not insane;—to censure

him for changing his mind on finding himself mistaken, though circumstances remain the same, is to censure him for what *ought* to be practised by every one who is not infallible;—and to censure him for holding contrary opinions at the same time, though this,—and this only—may strictly and properly be called inconsistency, and ought sedulously to be avoided, is to misapply the censure, which would be better directed, not against the inconsistency of his notions with each other, but for the erroneousness of those which *are* erroneous. The consistency with each other, of opinions that are all wrong, is far enough from improving the case.

As no one should be censured for Inconsistency, so no one should be praised for Consistency; because when there *is* ground for either censure or praise, some better reason for it may always be assigned.

The maintaining of Consistency must always be a bad reason to give for any act or opinion: if a principle or measure is right, that surely is reason enough for supporting it; if wrong, surely the being in the wrong yesterday is a bad reason for being wrong to day.



### VIII. SUPPRESSION OF THE EXERCISE OF REASON.

As the Telescope is not a substitute for, but an aid to, our sight; so, Revelation is not designed to supersede the use of reason, but to supply its deficiencies.

It is the characteristic of Truth to bear discussion.

Those who deprecate the asking or giving a reason for their faith, must not wonder if it be supposed that they have a faith for which there is no reason.

If a man once comes to doubt of what he had been accustomed to take for granted, he will reject it.

Unless reason be employed in ascertaining what doctrines are revealed, humility cannot be exercised in acquiescing in them.

Those who, in accordance with the apostolic injunction, are "ready to *give* a reason of the faith that is in them," will be also ready to *hear* reason.

There is a kind of believer in religion, who wishes to believe, from a conviction that religion is a *desir-*

*able* sentiment to cherish ; and resolves never to enquire whether it is true, from a suspicion that the inquiry might prove fatal.

Many people are led into the error of fancying that an irrational faith is even firmer than a rational one, by mistaking for a firm belief, a firm resolution of the *will* to believe. They seem to imagine that faith can be made firm only by a sort of brute force upon the understanding, and by *brow-beating*, as it were, their own minds, and those of others, into implicit submission. Now you never see traces of this kind of violence in the case of other truths which men really believe most firmly. You never hear a man protesting with great vehemence, that he is convinced that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that the earth is round like a ball, and not flat, like a platter ; and denouncing all who cannot see the proof. Good proof *satisfies* the mind of itself, and excludes reasonable doubt without any violent effort. When you are sure that the door is strong enough to keep out the intruder, you sit quietly by your fireside, and let him kick his heels against it till he is tired. But if you rushed over and clapped your back and shoulders to the bolt, that would imply that the door is really weak, or, at least that your faith in it is

weak ;—that is, that you had not full confidence in its strength.

A clear or faint apprehension of the subject matter, and a clear or faint apprehension of the *evidence* of it, are two things totally different and entirely unconnected, yet often confounded in what pertains to religion, though never, by any one of ordinary good sense, in any subject where religion is not concerned. For instance,—there is, I suppose, no one who seriously doubts the existence of something which we call soul—or mind—be it substance or attribute, material or immaterial—and of the mutual connexion between it and the body. Yet how very faint and imperfect a notion it is that we can form of it, and of many of its phenomena that are of daily occurrence! The partial suspension of mental and bodily functions during sleep,—the effects of opium and other drugs on both body and mind, the influence,—exercised by volition, and by various mental emotions, on the muscles, and on other parts of the bodily frame,—and many other of these phenomena, have exercised for ages the ingenuity of the ablest men, to find even any approximation towards but an imperfect explanation of them. Yet the *evidence on which we believe in the reality* of these, and of many other things no less dimly and partially understood,

is perfect.—On the other hand, the characters, transactions, &c., represented by dramatic writers, or described by historians, are often as *clearly intelligible* as it is possible for any thing to be; yet from the total want of evidence, or from the want of clear and decisive evidence, as to their *reality*, we regard them as either entire fictions, or mixtures of fable and truth, or as more or less likely to have actually existed. The character and conduct of Lear, for instance, or Othello, or Hamlet, or Macbeth, are perfectly intelligible; though it is very doubtful how far the tales which suggested to Shakespeare the most of his dramas had any foundation in fact, or were originally fictitious. Many, again, of the orations recorded by the ancient Greek and Roman historians, are as easily and plainly to be understood as any that are reported in our own times; but in what degree each of these is a faithful record of what was actually spoken, is a point on which we have, in some cases, a slight and imperfect evidence; and in others, none that deserves the name.—Now, Religion does not, in this respect, really differ from other subjects. Accordingly, we find that the evidence for the Christian religion was perfect and distinct, though its character was imperfectly understood by those to whom it was first preached; and that, dim, and indistinct, and imperfect, as were still their notions (as to a great

degree ours must also be) concerning "the Son of God," it was no indistinct or imperfect evidence on which they believed that He *was* so; while, on the other hand, the character and pretensions of the false Christs, who afterwards arose, were readily understood; but were supported by no evidence that could satisfy an unprejudiced mind, bent on the attainment of truth.

The representing *all* appeal to reason, as useless in cases where the argumentative faculty is not *alone* sufficient, is like denying the utility of light, because it will not enable a man to see, whose eyes are not in a state to perform their functions.

To decline beginning at all, because we must begin in imperfection, is to say, that since veteran soldiers only are well fitted to perform their part, therefore, none but veterans should be brought into the field.

Our indistinct conceptions of a truth, affect not the reality of its existence, any more than things, because seen dimly in the dark, become in themselves the less substantial.

As the prudent traveller, compelled to journey in the twilight,—while ever mindful of the risk of stray-

ing from the path and forming false judgments of the country round, viewed by the imperfect light,—yet, in his natural wish, that the sun would rise, neglects not to make the best use he can of his eyes, in the faint glimmering that is allowed him ; so, the wise Christian will not be led, by his conviction of the limited and imperfect nature of the human faculties, to slacken or remit, as vain, his enquiries.

Truth is a steady thing, and acts steadily through the reason, by the weight of evidence. To rest upon men's fancies and feelings only, is to work upon that which flags and becomes sluggish when not continually roused by fresh excitement ; just as a drunkard is tempted to drink more deeply every day, from finding that his constitution needs the stimulant more and more.

There is surely as much presumption in measuring everything by our own feelings, fancies, and prejudices, as by our own reasonings.

Fancy, when once brought into religion, knows not where to stop. It is like one of those fiends in old stories which any one could *raise*, but which, when raised, could never be kept within the magic circle.

Those who distrust all exercise of the intellect, while resigning themselves freely to the guidance of what they call the heart, that is, their prejudices, passions, inclinations, and fancies, would do well to remember that the disciples were led by the dictates of a sound *understanding* to say, "No man can do these miracles . . . except God be with him," and then to believe and obey Jesus implicitly; but that Peter was led by his *heart* to say, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

Each part of our nature should be duly controlled, and kept within its own proper province; and the whole "brought into subjection to Christ," and dedicated to Him. But there is no real Christian humility—though there be debasement—in renouncing the exercise of human reason, to follow the dictates of human feeling. The Apostle's precept is, "in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."

The voluntary humiliation of those who are ever declaiming against the pride of human reason, and insisting on the necessity of being guided by the heart rather than the head, is a prostration not of themselves before God, but of one part of themselves before another part, and resembles the idolatry of the

Israelites in the wilderness. The people *stripped themselves* of their golden ornaments, and cast them into the fire, “and there came out this calf.”

That faith which is counted for righteousness, consists not in believing *without* evidence, but in being open to evidence; not in believing without good reason, but in listening to reason.

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#### IX. ABUSE of REASON.

REASON can never be better employed than in deciding where her operations must be stopped.—

“Nescire velle quæ magister optimus  
Docere non vult, erudita incititia est.”

When once it has been ascertained that a Divine revelation exists, our own speculations ought to be controlled and regulated by that revelation; they should never be suffered to range, unlimited and unassisted, on a subject on which God has Himself decided that man is not competent, of himself, to judge rightly. If Reason be enthroned as the judge and law-giver, she will not readily resign her seat and submit her decisions to Revelation.



There are two mistakes which have an especial tendency to lead to presumptuous speculation, one of the chief sources of error in theological and metaphysical discussions :—first, the expectation, oftentimes illgrounded, that *full* and *distinct* notions may be obtained of whatever is *revealed* in Scripture ; and secondly, the mistake of supposing that we understand more clearly than we do, any thing of which the *name* is very familiar to us : a mistake like that of him who, because a letter of the alphabet is employed in algebraical calculations to denote some unknown quantity, should suppose that, by this means, it becomes at once a *known* quantity.

It is not that one of the philosophical theories that have been introduced to explain the Christian dispensation is wrong for *this* reason, and another for *that*, but they are *all* wrong alike ; because they *are theories* relative to matters on which to form any philosophical theories whatever, is vain, and absurd, and irreverent :

“ Unus utrique

Error ; sed variis illudit partibus.”

It is well worth while to remark the manner in which each form of “philosophy and vain deceit” is opposed by the sacred writers, and by John in particular. Suppose a plain man to have been listening

to a great deal of ingenious, speculative conjecture as to what must be, or are likely to be, the climate, condition, and productions of a certain distant country, and to reply, "I know, as a matter of fact, and can bear witness, that none of these things are as you say, for I am intimate with a person, whom you know to be of unquestioned knowledge and credibility, who is a *native* of that country; I have conversed much with him on the subject, and he has shewn me the productions of the country. I will tell you what he has said to me, and what he has shewn me, which will prove to you that your speculations are wholly unfounded." Now just such is the character of John's Gospel.

As, in total darkness, or in respect of objects beyond our horizon, the dimmest and the clearest sight are on a level, so learning cannot advance one man beyond another, in the comprehension of things confessedly beyond the reach of the human faculties.

To bring in human philosophy to help out Revelation, when it cannot be made even to seem to gratify curiosity about things of no practical importance, is to bring a lamp to the dial plate, when the sun-light fails, in order to find out the hour.

To dare to believe less, or to pretend to understand more, than God has expressly revealed, is equally profane presumption.

The next best thing to understanding the whole of any subject, is to be aware of that part of it we do *not* understand.

The old proverb, "A fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer," may very fairly have this added as a rider to it, "A wise man cannot ask more questions than he will find fools ready to answer."

Too much attention cannot be bestowed on that important yet much neglected branch of learning—the knowledge of man's ignorance.

Of matters relating to the Deity none *need* know less, and none *can* know more, than the Almighty has revealed.

We should study to be wise, not above Scripture, but in Scripture; to learn, not the things which God has *concealed*, but what he has revealed.

Where full and accurate knowledge is not to be

attained, it is a great point to keep clear of presumptuous error. Where the darkness cannot be removed, it is a great point to be aware that it is darkness, instead of being deceived and misled, by false lights and delusive appearances.

To seek to be "wise above that which is written," is to forget, that, by want of humility was that ruin incurred to retrieve which God was made man in Christ Jesus, who "*humbled* Himself unto death;" and to repeat the presumptuous transgression, which had shut the gates of eternal life. By inquisitive pride was immortal happiness forfeited, and the path by which we must travel back to its recovery, is that of patient and resigned humility.

The best heathen moralists knew not that the first step to elevation is humility; that though the palace of Wisdom be, indeed, a lofty structure, its entrance is low, and it forbids admission without bending. They knew not, or at least, taught not, that our nature must be exalted by first understanding and acknowledging the full amount of its weakness and imperfection,—“Jesus called unto Him a little child, and set him in the midst;”—what other teacher ever did the like?

There are three points of analogy in our situation

to that of children—as respects knowledge. It is, 1st, relative in kind ;—2nd, scanty and imperfect in degree ;—and, 3rd, practically sufficient. And in regard to the duties thence resulting, they are humility, docility, and devoted and affectionate submission to a Father's will.

As a child's father may be some mighty sovereign, or an eminent statesman, poet, philosopher, or warrior—one whose life is of importance to millions, or whose fame spreads over half the globe ; and yet be regarded by the child, who has but a very faint, if any, conception of all this, merely as *his father* ; so our knowledge of God is almost entirely relative.—He is revealed to us, not as He is in Himself, but, chiefly as He is in relation to ourselves.

It is accounted a mark of silly presumption, in a child to pretend to understand fully, and pronounce upon positively, the nature of any thing as it is in itself ; or to suppose that his friends have no other concerns to attend to, beside what relates to him. And is it not something worse than childish, to reason upon and discuss boldly, and pronounce upon dogmatically, the attributes and acts of God ! If humility is essentially becoming in a child, it must also be in a Christian, who is, and ever must be, in respect of the Creator, a child, and much less than a child.

As the earthly parent, whose character and designs are very imperfectly and indistinctly understood by his little children, yet communicates enough to them to entitle him to their love and confidence, and cheerful obedience; so the knowledge imparted to us in the Scriptures is sufficient for all practical purposes. —Amid all our weakness and ignorance that which we can best understand is our duty.

The absurd mistakes of children, from concluding that things must be *alike* because they are analogous and bear similar relations to something else, may serve as a mirror to shew the sort of mistakes we have also to guard against in the notions we form of the Almighty.

We should not rest satisfied with having *admitted* once for all, but we must also keep *steadily in view*, the necessity of a most reverent and trembling caution, and self-distrust, when we speak of “the secret things” that “belong to the Lord our God.”

The Christian, while earnestly seeking such knowledge as is “able to make (us) wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” should in his studies keep in mind that we now know but “in part” and see “through a glass, darkly;” and by his

life illustrate his conviction, that the "things which are revealed belong unto us, . . . . that we may *do* all the works of this Law."

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### X. SUPERSTITION.

EVERY truth, like true coin, has its counterfeit.

Superstition is not (as it has been defined) an *excess* of religious feeling, but a *misdirection* of it, an exhausting of it on vanities of man's devising.

Nothing is harmless that is *mistaken* for a virtue.

The more disposed any one is to submissive veneration, the greater the importance of guarding him against misdirected veneration—against false piety; against receiving as Divine, what, in reality, is human.

Minds strongly predisposed to superstition, may be compared to heavy bodies just balanced on the verge of a precipice. The slightest touch will send them over; and then, the greatest exertion that can be made, may be insufficient to arrest their fall.

Fanaticism implies Superstition ; but is not *necessarily* implied by it.

The more nearly any Superstitions approach to, so as to blend themselves with, true religion, the more do they deteriorate the spirit of it :—the more does the poisonous parasite, twining round the fairest boughs of the good tree, blight, by its noxious neighbourhood, the fruits which that tree should have borne.

Falsehood, like poison, will generally be rejected when administered alone ; but when blended with wholesome ingredients, may be swallowed unperceived.

Almost every system of superstition, to be rightly understood, should be read backwards. The fable, of the unburied, wandering disconsolate on the banks of the river Styx, was not the cause, but the effect, of that anxiety about our mortal remains, which has been felt in every age and country.

A readiness on the part of the people for delusion, is not so much the *consequence*, as itself the origin of priestcraft. It should not be forgotten, that the first *recorded* instance of departure from purity of



worship, as established by the revelation to the Israelites, was forced on the *priest* by the *people*. The excuse offered by Aaron for making the golden calf was, that he did it at the desire of the Israelites.

To believe that the superstitious are after all, on the safe side, is to believe that it is safe to *combine* with the medicines of a skilful physician, all the nostrums of all the ignorant practitioners in the neighbourhood.

There is no safe side but the side of truth.

One of the most prevailing characteristics of superstition, which is, at least, found, more or less, in most species of it, is the attributing of some sacred efficacy to the performance of an *outward* act, or the presence of some material object ; without anything else being needed, except an undoubting faith in that intrinsic efficacy.

As a patient will take his revenge for the nauseous dose he dares not refuse to swallow, by abusive ridicule of the physician and his medicines, knowing that this will not, so long as he does but take the drugs, diminish their efficacy ; so, the votary of

superstition profanely jests with the observance he dares not put aside. Thus it is that superstition generates profaneness.

The best that can be said of any outward forms, in themselves harmless, is that they are *well* calculated to cherish feelings of rational devotion; the worst that can be said of any of these, - is that they are peculiarly *liable* to become superstitious.

To disjoin the means of grace from the fruits of grace, is to convert a sacrament into a charm.

Empty forms convert the natural food of religion into its poison.

The more our religion becomes a religion of visible objects, the more it becomes a religion of outward worship. The *same* tendency which makes men put the sign of an unseen object in the place of that object, makes them put the sign of inward worship in the place of inward worship.

It is the general tendency of human nature to substitute the *means* of grace for the *fruits* of grace.

Superstition, in all its various forms and degrees,

is not merely a folly to be ridiculed, but a mischief to be dreaded.

Superstition is the more dangerous, from its providing an exercise for the natural and original sentiment of religion in the human mind ; and satisfying, by the practice of superstitious ceremonies, this natural craving, (so to speak,) after Divine worship ; thus, more easily extinguishing true piety, setting the conscience at rest, and preoccupying, by an idol, God's place in the heart.

Religion is the medicine of the soul, and our spiritual enemy knows that superstition is the specific poison that may most easily be blended with it, and will the most completely destroy its efficacy.

He who rashly gives heed to superstitious delusions, errs not from *excess of faith*, but from want of faith ; for what is true in his belief, he receives not *because* it is *true*,—but because it agrees with some prejudice or fancy of his own : and he is right, where he *is* right, only by chance. Having violated the spirit of the First Commandment, by regarding what is human with the veneration due to that only which is Divine, his worship, even of the true God, becomes an abomination. He has set up idols in his

heart, and "the Lord, the jealous God, will set His face against that man."

Where anything, not in itself moral or religious, is *connected* with religion, Superstition fastens upon that, because it is "worldly," and lets the rest go. Thus, when God's justice is described in Scripture as vengeance, to shew us that it pursues the offender as sternly as a revengeful man *would* pursue his enemy, Superstition fastens on the thought of God's thirsting for *revenge*, and regards sin only as an offence which provokes in God a desire of inflicting pain on somebody. Again, when water, or bread and wine, are made *signs* of the power of the Holy Spirit, or of Christ's body and blood sacrificed for us, superstition fastens on the water, or the bread and wine, as if they were the things themselves. When a place must be set apart for Divine worship, Superstition fancies that God dwells in that *place*, rather than in the hearts of the worshippers. When pictures or images of holy persons are set before us, Superstition fastens on the image, as if it were the reality. When rites or ceremonies are used to *express* our devotion, Superstition *makes* them our devotion. When prayers have to be *said*, Superstition makes the *saying* them, prayer. When good books are to be perused, Superstition makes the

perusal, edification. When works are to be done *from a good motive*, Superstition makes the outward action the good work. When suffering *for righteousness' sake* is commended, Superstition takes the suffering for merit; and so in many other instances. It seizes ever on the outward—on that which is not moral; on that which strikes the senses or the imagination—and fastens there; while true religion, on the contrary, calls on us to “lift up our hearts” from the earthly to the heavenly, and use the outward, as a help to the inward.

Let but the stock of genuine Christianity shoot vigorously, and then its shoots will starve the superstitions that have been *grafted* in it.

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## XI. THE LOVE OF NOVELTY.

THE love of novelty—the pleasure men have in the idea of being original thinkers, or at least of being able to shake off established prejudices—often impede the pursuit of truth for its own sake, and make it a secondary object.

A man who is excessive in his dread of excessive

deference, will be very apt to fall into the opposite extreme of courting paradox and striving after originality.

Some men are zealous for truth, provided it be truth brought to light by themselves.

As custom will often blind men to the good, as well as to the evil effects, of any long established system, we must never alter for the mere sake of altering, nor indulge the craving after novelty for its own sake.

In philosophy, the pursuit of novelty and of truth may often chance to coincide; in religion, seldom, if ever.

There are two kinds of "New Truth" and of "Discovery," the distinction between which is most important. First, such truths as were, before they were discovered, absolutely unknown, being not implied by anything we previously knew. Such are all *matters of fact*, strictly so called, when first made known to one who had not any such previous knowledge, as would enable him to ascertain them *a priori*; *i. e.*, by reasoning; as, if we inform a man that we have a colony in New South Wales. The communi-

cation of this kind of knowledge is properly called information. We gain it from *observation* and from *testimony*. No *mere internal workings* of our own minds, or mere discussions in words, will make such a fact known to us, though there is great room for sagacity *in judging what testimony to admit*, and in the forming of conjectures, that may lead to profitable observation. The other class of discoveries is of a very different nature. That which may be elicited by reasoning, and consequently is implied in that which we already know, we assent to on that ground, and not from observation or testimony. To all practical purposes, indeed, a truth of this description may be as completely unknown to us as the others; but as soon as it is set before us, and the argument by which it is connected with our previous notions made clear, we recognize it as something conformable to, and contained in our former belief. We are conscious that we possess in what we already know, the means to ascertain the truth of it, that we have a right, in short, to bear our testimony to its truth.

Suppose there is a vein of metal on a man's estate, which he does not know of; is it part of his possessions or not? and when he finds it out and works it, does he then *acquire a new* possession or not? Certainly not a new possession in the same sense as if he had a fresh estate bequeathed to him, which he had

formerly no *right* to; but to all practical purposes, it is a new possession. Again, reasoning has been aptly compared to the piling together blocks of stone; on each of which, as on a pedestal, a man can raise himself a small, and but a small, height above the plain; but which when skilfully built up, will form a flight of steps, which will raise him to a great elevation. Now, (to pursue this analogy,) when the materials are all ready to the builder's hand, the blocks ready, dug, and brought, his work resembles one of the two kinds of discovery just mentioned, viz., that to which we have assigned the name of *instruction*: but if his materials are to be entirely, or in part, provided by himself—if he himself is forced to dig fresh blocks from the quarry—this corresponds to the other kind of discovery.

“Man,” says the illustrious Lord Bacon, “having the office of attending on nature, and studying to ascertain her meaning, (*naturæ minister et interpretes*,) is limited in his knowledge and his power by the observations he has made of the course of nature: for nature can be controlled only by submitting to her laws: in all our performances we can do nothing more than apply or remove bodies already existing: the rest, nature accomplishes.” Just so with Revelation. Man,—*i. e.*, uninspired man,—by attentive



study of the Scriptures, may learn much of God's dealings with our race, and of His gracious offers and promises; and may so apply this knowledge, and avail himself of those offers, as to become "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" but he can no more make or alter a revelation, than he can set aside the physical laws of the universe.

A new Truth, in the sense of something neither expressly nor virtually asserted before—not implied (involved) in anything already known—cannot be properly looked for in religion. A full and final revelation having been made, no discovery, properly so called, of any high importance is to be expected; not merely because the Book, which contains all we know of the Divine will, has been so long before us (for so also has the book of nature in which nevertheless we are daily reading new truths, which had escaped the researches of our predecessors), but because that Book was designed by the Almighty to convey such instruction as He judged needful for all, which purpose it would not have answered, if its true sense and doctrine were not understood by any for so many centuries. Could it be materially altered by any new mode of interpretation from what has been uniformly received, it cannot be called

(at least a final) *revelation*. Elucidation, indeed, of minor points may be looked for, and be very valuable; fresh topics of evidence may be expected (in these later times) to supply the defect of recent miracles—prophecies may become intelligible by their fulfilment—and fresh arguments in support of the essential doctrines may be brought forward. All this furnishes ample scope for the utmost conceivable ingenuity and originality of thought, and the unremitting labours of a whole life would be insufficient for accomplishing all that would be desirable on each of these points; so that no excuse is left for indolence and continued ignorance;—but still, unless our faith be the same in the main with that of the early Christians, we may be well assured that it is unsound.

The temptation of novelty, cannot be too sedulously guarded against, when we consider how powerful a principle of human nature that must be, which could seduce even the hearers of the Apostles themselves; who were led away by daring innovators, corrupting, with their own devices, the pure stream of Divine truth, even close to the fountain head.

We must beware of an idle craving after novelties, of our own devising, while the infallible and *final*


revelation of God's will is before us ; and studiously repressing all care to be " wise above that which is written," endeavour to divert into some other channel, any eager desire we may naturally and reasonably feel for discovering, what may strictly be called, new truths. A boundless field lies open before us, nor need we fear that the stores of useful knowledge to be drawn from the study of nature and of science, will ever be exhausted.

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## XII. THE DREAD OF INNOVATION.

A MISTAKEN dread of Innovation causes men to overlook the errors that are, in reality, the greatest innovations.

The maxim, almost universally admitted, that there is so strong a love of novelty for its own sake, in the human mind, as to attach a character of danger to any change, though in itself small, and harmless or beneficial, seems scarcely borne out by experience. History records no event that indicates such a principle in human nature as a fondness for change for its own sake. Man's love of novelty belongs to re-



creation, and ornaments, and the like ; not to the serious concerns of life, in which the mass of mankind are wedded to established usages and institutions, even when they have nothing but custom to recommend them.

As men are found tolerating in houses they have long inhabited, the inconvenience of some ill-planned door, or window, or passage, when the remedy would be easy ; while in a newly built house, if any like inconvenience were found, an alteration would be made instantly, so is it in legislation and all human affairs. Recent experiment may bring to light and exaggerate the defects of a new system, but *long* familiarity blinds us to those very defects.

An anecdote is told of a gentleman, who, being entangled in the intricacies of the numberless windings of the deep and shady Devonshire lanes, trotted briskly on, in the hope that he should at length come to some house whose inhabitants would direct him, or to some more open spot from which he could take a survey of the different roads, and observe whither they led. He proceeded a long time in this manner, encouraged by observing, as he advanced, the prints of horses' feet, which indicated that he was in no unfrequented track : and these

becoming continually more and more numerous, the further he went, he accordingly paid the less anxious attention to the bearings of the country, from increasing assurance that he was in the right way. But still he saw neither house nor human creature, and at length, the recurrence of the same objects by the roadside opened his eyes to the fact, that all this time, misled by the multitude of the turnings, he had been riding in a circle ; and that the foot marks, the sight of which had so cheered him, were those of *his own horse* ; their number, of course, increasing with every circuit he took. Had he not fortunately made this discovery, perhaps he might have been riding there now. Are not men in many parts of their conduct in life, liable thus to follow the track of their own footsteps, to set themselves an example, —and to flatter themselves that they are going right, from their conformity to their own precedent ?

There is always a tendency to appeal, with the same kind of deference, to the authority of “old times,” as to that of aged men, from associating with “old times,” the impression of the superior wisdom resulting from experience, which, as a general rule, we attribute to old *men*. Yet no one is really ignorant that the world is older now than ever it was, and that the instruction to be derived from

observation on the past must be greater, supposing other things equal, to every successive generation.

It will often be found that the same truths, which when stated generally, are regarded as truisms not worth mentioning, will, in their practical application, appear revolting paradoxes.

In many a case of innovation, it might be found that what is new is not wrong, and what is wrong is not new.

Seeming innovations are really restorations, returns to the right course, by the sudden correction of great errors, resulting from the accumulation of imperceptibly small ones. A striking instance is afforded in "the change of the style." Such restoration is but the scouring of a room, removing, in an hour or two, the dirt which had been gathering for several days, which is only called *keeping it clean*, not changing it.

At the time of the Reformation how startling was the idea that there could be *several* independent churches, owing no allegiance to the successors of Peter! Yet, in awaking from their first surprise, men found the novelty to be just the restoration of

the primitive state of things, the following of apostolic example ; so it is with many a thing that is cried up, or cried down, as a novelty.

Hurtful and extensive changes are often attributed to harmless and trifling ones—*Post hoc ; ergo, propter hoc*. But though many instances may be found of small alterations being *followed* by great and mischievous ones, it is doubtful whether all history can furnish a single instance of the greater innovation having been, properly speaking, *caused* by the lesser.

The best security against revolution is the constant correction of abuses, and introduction of needed improvements. It is the neglect of *timely repair* that makes *rebuilding* necessary.

To shew that the present is not the *fittest conceivable* occasion for making a certain change in itself advisable,—that a better occasion may be *imagined*, or that a better occasion is past,—that the Sybilline books might have been purchased cheaper some time ago, is not enough to justify indefinite procrastination : it is requisite to shew also that a more suitable occasion is likely to arise ; and how soon ; and again, that it will have been worth waiting for ; and

moreover, that men, when it does come, will be more disposed to take advantage of it.

To conceive a system—whether actually existing or ideal—so framed *as to keep* itself in good order, is to be beset by the same chimerical hope, in human affairs, that has misled so many speculators in mechanics,—the vain expectation of attaining the perpetual motion.

To say that no change shall take place is to pretend to control the course of the sun. To say that none shall occur except such as are undesigned, and accidental, is to say, that though the clock may gain or lose indefinitely, at least we take care it shall never be regulated. “And since,” says Bacon, “things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be never altered for the better designedly, when is the evil to end?”

*The remedy of a remedy* is a change far more easily to be brought about than the first change; and, therefore, the imperfect remedying of a bad law is in itself hopeful. While the mortar is wet, a building is more readily altered.

No opinion is to be received simply because it is



*old*, or simply because it is *new* ; but only because it is *true*. We must equally beware of venturing rashly on untrodden paths, without a careful survey of the country, and of following in too confident security, *the track of our own footsteps*.

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### XIII. UNDUE DEFERENCE TO HUMAN AUTHORITY.

THE great body of mankind shew their humbleness of mind, by submitting themselves to man, instead of to God.

To believe as others believe, is a compendious creed, taxing neither a man's intellect, nor his industry ;— a creed resulting from the indolence—the spiritual carelessness,—the weakness and the dishonest ambition of human nature.

Orthodoxy, which, strictly speaking, means right faith, in popular language, means conformity to what is generally *received* as the right faith.

The reference so often made to the words of Vincentius Lirinensis,—“ *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus, &c.*,”—seems altogether unaccountable. That whatever is believed, and always has

been, by all Christians everywhere, is a part of the Christian faith, is a truism, as barren as it is undeniable. It cannot possibly be called in to solve *any question in dispute*, since, by its own character, it relates expressly and exclusively to such points as *never* have been disputed among Christians.

Authority, (in the sense of power,) in reference to any *particular* act or decision, does not admit of *degrees*; while, on the other hand, authority, in the sense of *a claim to deference*, admits of infinite degrees; and, therefore, an appeal to an undefined authority of a vast and *indefinite* number of writers, extending over a very long and *indefinite* space of time, is, indeed, to set up a standard inaccessible from its very vagueness.


It is no uncommon mistake, to imagine many witnesses to be bearing *concurrent* testimony to the *same* thing, when in truth they are attesting different things. Multitudes may agree in maintaining some system or doctrine, which perhaps one out of a million may have convinced himself of, by reason and reflection; while the rest have assented to it in implicit reliance on authority. One or two men may be bearing original testimony to some fact or transaction; and one or two *hundred* who are repeat-

ing what they have heard from them, may be in reality, only bearing witness to their *having heard* it, and to their own belief. The shops supply us with abundance of busts and prints of some great man, all striking likenesses—of each other.

As, when a prevailing current in particular spots sets strongly towards certain shoals, we must expect that many vessels will strike on them ; so when the passions and prejudices of man tend towards some particular errors, it must be expected that such errors will generally prevail ; the presumption therefore is rather, if anything, against taking as authority the prevailing opinions.

Who were the orthodox, and who were the true worshippers in Israel, when Elijah alone was left of the Lord's prophets, while Baal's prophets were four hundred and fifty men ?

The exercise of private judgment in religious matters, is a right, but not a right that a man through modesty may waive ; for it is not more a right than a duty—nay, it is a right *because* it is a duty ; but were we to waive all consideration as to the right, and as to the duty, the important point remains of its *necessity*.



The right of private judgment, is one, which, God has not merely given permission, that men *may* exercise, but made provision that they *must*. We may refrain from exercising it on this or that particular point, but it is only to transfer it to another point. For instance, a man distrusting his own knowledge of medicine, may refrain from exercising any judgment as to the remedies he should use, and may put himself wholly in the hands of a physician : that is, he judges that a physician is needful, and that such and such a practitioner is worthy of confidence. Or supposing he distrusts his own judgment on this point also, then, he consults some friend, whom he judges to be trustworthy, as to what physician he shall employ. On any matters in which a man takes serious interest, such as religious matters, he can avoid exercising private judgment, only by withdrawing his attention as much as possible from the whole subject, except as far as regards outward observances and forms.

Some momentous questions must first have been decided by private judgment, even by those who surrender it to human guidance. 1st. Whether there is a God. 2nd. Whether Christianity comes from God. 3rd. Whether they shall submit to human guidance ; and, 4th. Whose guidance it shall be.

If we *are* competent to judge who our guide is to be, then our alleged unfitness for the exercise of private judgment is done away. If we are *not* competent to judge who is to be ; then, though we may admit the necessity of an infallible guide, we can never be sure that we have found one. Every thing will depend on the reasons we may have for trusting him ; for no building can be more firm than the foundation it rests on.

To leave important questions to be decided, in the first instance, by those who are, by supposition, incompetent judges, and who for that very reason are to rely implicitly on an infallible guide, is to tell them that because they cannot steer their course without a pilot, they must make a voyage to a distant port in order to find one.

It seems somewhat strange, that it is always by some *reason* or other, that men seek to persuade men to *renounce their* reason, to *argue* men into *neglecting arguments*, and *prove* to them that they *cannot judge* of proofs. They forget that their objections, as lying against the *proofs of reasoning itself*, universally, will, therefore, of course apply to those very arguments they are themselves adducing. They are acting like the woodman, who had mounted

a tree, and, who was so earnestly employed in cutting the boughs, that he unconsciously cut off the bough on which he was standing.

To follow imperfect, uncertain, or corrupted traditions, in order to avoid erring in our own judgment, is but to exchange one danger for another.

It is said that, some years ago, there was a bridge at Bath in so crazy a condition that persons chose rather to make a long circuit than run the risk of crossing it. One day, however, a very nervous lady, hurrying home to dress for the evening, came suddenly upon the spot, without, till that moment, remembering the danger. What was she to do? If she went on, the frail arch might give way under her; to go round would be fatiguing, and attended with loss of time. She stood for some minutes trembling in anxious hesitation; at last a lucky thought occurred to her—she called for a sedan chair, and was *carried over* in that conveyance!

Now, when people, who think to escape the danger of having to judge for themselves in religious matters, by choosing to take some guide as an infallible one, and believe or disbelieve as he bids them, thus adding, to the undiminished previous chances of error, the additional chances against the authority

they have chosen,—what is this but putting, not only their own weight, but that of the sedan chair also, on the tottering arch?

For any error we adopt on our guide's authority ; and, furthermore, for bowing to his guidance without good proof of his legitimate authority, we shall have to answer to Him who has called upon us to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." We are responsible, not only for doing, but also for leaving undone ; else the servant who hid his Lord's talent in the earth would have escaped condemnation.

There is no real humility in the fancied renunciation of private judgment for submission to an infallible human authority. Though the gnomon of a sundial has no power of itself to indicate the hour, yet when the sun shines on it, the motions of its shadow must be as correct as those of the sun's rays which it follows ; and in like manner, he is infallible, actually and practically, in his belief, even while speaking of himself as fallible, who always believes precisely what an infallible Church or leader believes.

Pretenders to infallibility in religion have this advantage (if it is to be reckoned one) over other

quacks, that the mischief which they do cannot be fully known till the great day. They make promises about the unseen world, and the victims of their deceit cannot come back from the grave to warn others. Hence, the belief in an infallible guidance is much more common in religious matters, than in the affairs of this world, where experience soon detects such impostors or vain fancies.

The guides on whom, as the wise and learned, the mass of the people are implicitly to rely, soon become *unwise* and *unlearned*, because there is none to detect their deficiencies; they become ignorant of Scripture, because left to be its authoritative interpreters. Their proper office being to train their less enlightened brethren to "give a reason of the hope that is in them," they save themselves this labour by training them to do without a reason.

The instructors of a people need far more knowledge than their oracles.

That it is not the will of God, that man should have recourse to any human infallible tribunal, is at once the simplest, and the most decisive argument against doing so; and that it is not His will, is determined, by the fact that no such tribunal exists.



Our conjecture that, in a Divine dispensation, a provision is requisite, and therefore to be expected, for a power of infallibly interpreting Scripture, and deciding finally all questions that may arise, cannot alter facts. If we are to infer the existence of a miracle, because *we* conclude it to be important, we make ourselves the standard for the Divine procedure.

Since the very purpose for which an infallible guide is supposed to be needed, is the removal of all reasonable doubt, it is plain that if God had thought fit to provide us with such a guide, He would not have left it at all doubtful, where we are to look for that guide.

Supposing the Apostles and their Divine Master had really regarded it as a part—and it must have been a most essential part, if one at all—of the Christian system; had they really designed that there should be, for the Universal Church, any institution answering to the Oracle of God at the Tabernacle, it is wholly incredible, that the Lord Jesus Himself should be perpetually spoken of as the Head of His Church, without any reference to any supreme authority on earth, to any human body as His representative and vicegerent. Now they do not merely

omit all such reference, but they omit it in such a manner, and under such circumstances, as plainly to amount to an exclusion. A ship was about to sail for a certain harbour without the captain, who had been usually the commander, but who was then called to serve elsewhere. He came on board to take leave, and to warn the officers and others of the dangerous rocks and shoals, which, to his knowledge, beset the entrance; exhorting them to keep a good look-out, and also to enquire carefully into the character of any pilot who might offer his services; as some, he was certain, were in league with wreckers and would purposely steer the ship on rocks, that these wretches might plunder the wreck. And if we were told, there was, *to his knowledge*, a lighthouse erected there, as a sure land-mark; and a ship could not go wrong, that did but steer straight for that; should we not at once exclaim, that since *he said not a word* of this, he must be either a fool or a knave? And on being assured that he was an eminently wise and good man, and thoroughly well informed, we should say, "Then this story of the lighthouse must be a fiction."

And now look at Paul's farewell (Acts xx. 29—31) to the elders at Miletus, where, in the immediate prospect of death, warning his disciples of the dangers to which they would be exposed, and shewing

them how to meet them, he said not one word of any infallible judge or tribunal, but only exhorted them to watch, and remember what had been taught them.

The natural result of compulsory cessation of discussion is an apathetic tranquillity, an indolent, uninquiring acquiescence best characterized by the expression, "Seeing then, that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet."

The craving for infallibility is only, an enquiry after some mode of exemption from all further enquiry ; only, a care to obtain relief from all further need of care ; only, a navigation in search of some safe haven, in which the helm may be abandoned, and the vessel left to ride securely, without any need of watching the winds and currents, and of looking out for shoals and rocks ; only, a hope to acquire a release from all necessity of vigilant circumspection. Can we wonder, then, that all that ministers to such a principle should meet with ready acceptance from human indolence and spiritual carelessness ?

The abstaining from all reasoning and all investigation, does not always secure freedom from all uneasy doubt—a desire for which creates the craving for infallibility. Once granted that the church, sect,

or leader, we have taken as our guide, is perfectly infallible, and there is an end of all doubts respecting particular points; but this is, in effect, to shut out what may be merely apparent doubts, only to leave room for one great and real doubt which pervades the whole. An uneasy doubt will sometimes haunt a man,—in spite of his efforts to repress it, and however strenuously he may deny, even to himself, its existence, whether the infallibility claimed, which is the foundation of the whole building, be itself really well established,—a suspicion will occasionally cross the mind, however strenuously repelled, “*Is there not a lie in my right hand?*” And the reluctance often shewn to examine the foundation, and ascertain whether it is really sound, is an indication not of full confidence in its firmness, but of a lurking suspicion that it will not bear examining.

The faith of those who depend on the authority of living guides now, is plainly quite different from the faith of the early Christians, who relied upon the testimony of the competent witnesses who were then living. Those then, who ground their faith upon the testimony of those same witnesses preserved in the writings of the New Testament, they it is that really follow the example of the early Church, and “are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Pro-

phets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."

As the Christian minister should teach as Divine Truth, that only which *he* is convinced is scriptural, so his hearers should receive as Divine Truth, *that* only which *they* are convinced is scriptural.

To give to the decisions of any uninspired man, or body of men, that implicit deference due to the declarations and precepts of Holy Scripture, and due to nothing else, is not humble piety but profane presumption.

The Scriptures are not merely like the elementary propositions in mathematics, the first step and foundation of proof, but the *only* source of proof.

To refer to the formularies of a Church as tests of the fitness of persons to be members of it, is allowable and expedient; but to refer for the proof or disproof of doctrines solely or chiefly, to any, the most justly venerated, human authority, is to rob Scripture of its due dignity and proper office, and go so far on the way to establish the dangerous and encroaching precedent, of substituting human authority for Divine.

If any human interpretation or comment is to be received implicitly, and without appeal, it is placed practically, as far as relates to everything except a mere question of *dignity*, on a level with Scripture. Among the Parliamentarians at the time of the civil war, there were many, at first a great majority, who professed to obey the king's commands, as *notified to them by Parliament*, and levied forces in the king's name, against his person. If any one admitted Parliament to be the sole and authoritative interpreter and expounder of the regal commands, and this, without any check from any other power, it is plain that he virtually admitted the sovereignty of that Parliament, just as much as if he had recognized their formal deposition of the king.

As in the attempt to make both gold and silver the standard of currency, it will be found that any variation, however slight or however unfrequent, in their relative value, is sufficient to throw all accounts into confusion; so the endeavour at conformity in doctrine to the scriptural and the orthodox, is to strive for an unattainable object, unattainable for the same reason that no man can serve two masters, not because they are necessarily leading opposite ways, but simply because they are two and not one.

However near the adherents of the "orthodox"

and the "scriptural" respectively may appear in regard of the doctrines which they hold, still they go on different principles, like one man going by the clock, and another by the sun-dial. And he who aims at conforming to each of *two* standards, is "a double-minded man," and will be "unstable in all his ways."

Divine Truth must no more be taught as the commandments of men, than the commandments of men as Divine Truth.

Human teaching in religion is highly useful so long as Scripture proof is readily produced. It bears the same relation to Scripture, that what is called paper-currency does to gold and silver. Its sole value lies in the knowledge that it is convertible, on demand, into the precious metal it represents.

The claim to infallibility for human decisions, and the comparative disregard to Scripture, are the effect, not the cause, of that tendency to pay undue deference to human authority, from which, arising as it does in the principles of our nature, we can never be secure but by continual self-distrust, and by referring at every step "to the Law and to the Testimony,"—continually tracing up the stream of religious knowledge to the pure fountain-head of Scrip-

ture. The care, and diligence, and patient thought, and watchful observation, required for this drawing for ourselves the Christian truths, will be repaid, by our having through Divine grace, those truths ultimately fixed in the heart, as well as in the understanding. We shall not only "read," but, "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" them, so that the heavenly nourishment will enter into our whole frame, and make us not merely sound theologians, but sincere Christians, and good men, truly "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

In guarding against excessive deference and exclusive regard to authority of persons, rather than arguments, (which is undoubtedly one of the chief fallacies against which men ought to be cautioned,) it should not be forgotten, that if the opposite mode of judging, in every case, were to be adopted without limitation, it is plain that children could not be educated. Indeed, happily for the world, most of them, who should be allowed to proceed on this plan, would in consequence, perish in childhood. A pious Christian, again, has the same implicit reliance on his God, even when unable to judge of the reasonableness of His commands and dispensations, as a dutiful and affectionate child has on a tender parent. Now though such a man is, of course, regarded by



an Atheist as weak and absurd, it is surely on account of his *belief*, not of his consequent conduct, that he is so regarded. Even Atheists would in general admit that he is acting reasonably, on the supposition that there is a God, who has revealed Himself to man.

He who renounces all pretensions to infallibility, whether an immediate, and personal, or a derived infallibility, by owning himself to be neither impeccable nor infallible, and by consenting to undergo the trials of vigilance and of patience, which God has appointed for him, need not fear to forfeit by this the attainment of truth—all cheerful hope of final salvation,—all “joy and peace in believing.” On the contrary, while such as have sought for peace—for mental tranquillity and satisfaction—rather than for truth, will often fail both of truth and peace; he who seeks truth first, is more likely to attain both, from his gracious Master. He has bid us watch and pray; He has taught us, through His blessed Apostle to “take heed to ourselves,” and to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;” and He has declared that He “worketh in us;” He has bid us “rejoice in hope;” He has promised that He will not suffer us to be “tempted above that we are able to bear;” and He has

taught us to look forward to the time, when we shall no longer see as by means of a mirror "darkly," but "face to face;"—when we shall know, not "in part," but "even as we are known;"—when faith shall be succeeded by certainty, and hope be ripened into enjoyment. His precepts and His promises go together; His support and comfort are given to those who seek for them in the way He has himself appointed.

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#### XIV. THE LOVE OF APPROBATION AND THE DREAD OF CENSURE.

HUMAN approbation is a very good thing, when it happens to come incidentally; but it must never be made an object. The desire of truth must reign supreme, and everything else be welcomed only if coming in her train.

Deference for the (supposed) wise and good, and love of approbation, are two very distinct things, though in practice very difficult to be distinguished. The former may be felt towards those whom we never can meet with—who, perhaps, were dead, ages before we were born, and survive only in their writ-

ings. A man's desire to find himself in agreement with Aristotle, or Bacon, or Locke, or Paley, &c., however misplaced, or excessive, can have nothing to do with their approval of *him*. But when he is glad to concur with some living friends, whom he thinks highly of, and dreads to differ from, then, it is very difficult to decide how far this feeling is the *presumption framed by his judgment*, in favour of the correctness of their views; and how far it is the desire of their approbation and sympathy, and dread of the reverse. It is the desire of personal approbation, the excessive care concerning what is thought of himself, that the lover of truth is bound so severely to check.

The lover of Truth, for its own sake, must set himself to *act* as if he cared nothing for either censure or approval, and in time he gets hardened as the Canadians do to walking in snow shoes (raquets). At first a man is almost crippled with the "*mal au raquet*,"—the pain and swelling of the feet; but the prescription is to *go on* walking in them, as if you felt nothing at all, and in a few days you do feel nothing. And this will always be the case, more or less, through God's help, with him who earnestly seeks to act unto the Lord and not unto men, if he will persevere, and *persevere from a right motive*.

Much eloquence and ingenuity is often exerted, in descanting on the propriety of not being wholly indifferent to the opinions formed of one—the impossibility of eradicating the regard for approbation—and the folly of attempting it, or pretending to it, &c. Now this is all very true; the propensity to desire to gain approval and escape censure, we are not called on to extirpate, (that being, I conceive, impossible;) but our care and pains are better bestowed in *keeping under* the feeling, than in *vindicating* it. It must be treated like the grass on a lawn which you wish to keep in good order; you neither attempt nor wish to *destroy* the grass; but you *mow* it down from time to time, as close as you possibly can, well trusting that there will be quite enough left, and that it will be sure to grow again.

To obtain the approbation of the wise and good by doing what is right, simply *because* it is right, is most gratifying to that natural and allowable wish, to escape the censure and claim the approval of our fellow creatures; but to make this gratification, either wholly or partly, our object—to hold up a finger *on purpose* to gain the applause of the whole world, is unjustifiable. One difficulty in acting on this principle is, that it often is even a duty to seek the good opinion of others, not as an *ultimate* object for its own sake,

but for the sake of influencing them for their own benefit, and that of others. "Let your light *so* shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven." But we are to watch and analyse the MOTIVES of even actions which we are sure are in themselves right. And this is a kind of vigilance which human nature is always struggling to escape. One class of men are satisfied so long as they *do* what is justifiable;—what may be done from a good motive and when *so* done *would* be right, and which therefore may be satisfactorily defended. Another class—the ascetic—are for cutting off every thing that *may* be a snare. They have heard of "the deceitfulness of riches," and so they vow poverty; which is less trouble than *watching their motives* in gaining and spending money. And so on with the rest. But if we would cut off all temptation, we must cut off our heads at once.

Neither human applause, nor human censure, is to be taken as the test of truth; but either should set us upon testing ourselves.

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## XV. MISTAKEN REGARD TO UNITY.

AGREEMENT in religion is not genuine Christian

concord, unless it be agreement in the genuine religion of the Gospel.

Those who reach truth will reach unity ; for truth is *one*. But men may, and often do, gain unity without truth—which is so far from being a good, that it is a great evil. It makes falsehood strong, and the professors of it contented in their error.

“No man can serve two masters,” because when they are radically opposed “he will love the one and hate the other;” and because, even though not necessarily opposed, they are not necessarily combined ; and cases will sometimes arise, in which he must “cleave to the one and despise” (disregard, and neglect) “the other.” There is not anything necessarily wrong in aiming at temporal advantages. But whoever has resolved on obtaining wealth in one way or in another, will sometimes be led to violate duty ; and he, again, who is fully bent on “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” will sometimes find himself called on to renounce temporal advantages, which, through the honesty, frugality, and temperance which he had practised from higher motives, he may have attained. And so it is with the occasionally-rival claims of truth and of unity, or of any two objects which may possibly be

in some instances opposed. We must make up our minds which, is, in that case, to give way. One must be the supreme—must be the “master.”

A mistaken notion of the Christian unity spoken of in the Scriptures, which represents it as consisting in having *one community on earth* to which all Christians belong or ought to belong, and to whose government all are bound to submit, has led to truth being made the secondary, and not the paramount object.

The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the human race *one*; but not as a society, for as such, it is only *one*, when considered as to its future existence. Its present unity consists in that its various societies are designed to be modelled on the same principles, and to enjoy common privileges; “One Lord, one faith, one baptism;” and all forming part of that great society of which the Head is in heaven, and of which many of the members only “live unto God” or exist in His counsels; some having long since departed, and some being not yet born. The term unity is applicable to the Universal Church, as one in reference to its Supreme Head in heaven, not as one community on earth, as the human race is one in respect of the One Creator and

Governor; but this does not make it *one family or one state*.

The Apostles founded Christian Churches, all based on the same principles, and having the same object in view, but all quite independent of each other. And while, by the inspiration of Him who knew what was in man, they delineated those Christian principles, which man could not have devised for himself, each Church has been left by the same Divine foresight, to make the application of those principles in its symbols, its forms of worship, and its ecclesiastical regulations; and while steering its course by the chart and compass, which His holy Word supplies, to regulate for itself the sails and rudder, according to the winds and currents it may meet with. Now I have little doubt, that the sort of variation resulting from this independence and freedom, so far from breaking the bond of peace is the best preservative of it. A number of neighbouring families living in perfect unity, will be thrown into discord as soon as you compel them to form one family, and to observe in things intrinsically indifferent, the same rules: one *e.g.*, likes early hours, and another late; one likes the windows open and another shut; and thus by being brought too close together, they are driven into ill-



will, by one being perpetually forced to give way to another. Of this character were the disputations which arose (though they subsequently assumed a different character) about church-music, the posture of the communicants, the colours of a minister's dress, the time of keeping Easter, &c., &c.

To vindicate our own or any other Church, not on the reasonable ground, that they are not at variance with gospel-principles, or with any Divine injunction designed to be of universal obligation, but on the ground of the exact conformity, which it is notorious they do not possess, to the most ancient models, and even to go beyond this and condemn all Christians whose institutions and ordinances are not "one and utterly like" our own, on the ground of their departure from the apostolical precedent, which no Church has exactly adhered to—does seem, to use no harsher expression, not a little inconsistent and unreasonable. This principle would go to exclude at once from the pale of Christ's Church, almost every Christian body, since the first two or three centuries.

Any system that makes unity the primary and indispensable object to which all else must be sacrificed, robs its adherents of the character of witnesses; while minor differences make all the more undeniable

and real, the testimony from the agreement in essential truth of persons left free to examine. The testimony (to use a simple and obvious illustration) of even a small number of *eye-witnesses* of any transaction, even though possessing no extraordinary powers of vision, would outweigh that of countless millions, who should have resolved to close their eyes, and to receive and retail the report they heard from a single individual.

Our religion was designed to renew indeed, but not to subvert our nature—to exalt and purify each individual, but not to destroy his individuality. Whatever points are faulty, indeed, must be corrected by our religion, or it will not have done its proper work; but many differences of taste and temper still remain, (and will give a certain tinge, even to the religion itself of each man,) which are in nowise hurtful, but may even be rendered serviceable to the general cause,—and which ought no more to be made a source of mutual jealousy and dissension, than the diversity of spiritual gifts among the early Christians.

We must carefully guard against confounding intellectual deficiencies with heretical perversity of will, remembering that the honest endeavours after

religious knowledge, the sincere faith and diligent obedience of those of feeble understanding or of uncultivated mind, are accepted by Him, in whose sight the wisest and ablest are but mere weakness and ignorance.

The principle of sacrificing truth to unity creeps in gradually. The sacrifice *first* demanded, is in general, not a great one. Men are led on step by step, from silence as to some mistake, to connivance at fallacies, and thence to suppression, and then to misrepresentation of truth, and ultimately, to the support of known falsehood.

Unity, when made the first object, is always an evil, since, besides the possibility that men may be united in what is erroneous and wrong in itself, it must be remembered, that whatever absolute truth there may be in what is assented to on such a principle, it is not truth, to those who assent to it not on conviction but for union's sake.

Peace is too dearly purchased by slavery of any kind, especially spiritual slavery.

Controversy, though always an evil in itself, is sometimes a necessary evil.

To give up everything that is worth contending about, in order to prevent hurtful contentions, is, for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, to condemn the field to perpetual sterility.

Though the recollection that all sincere Christians have a common cause to maintain against falsehood, should not prevent us from pointing out the errors of our fellow Christians, yet it should certainly influence the *manner* of our doing so.

As controversy should always be regarded as an evil in itself, to be incurred only when necessary for the sake of important good, this principle acted upon would alone exclude three different classes of subjects, all calculated to gender strife; those which relate to matters, first, too deep and mysterious; or, secondly, too minute and trifling; or, thirdly, too *speculative* and remote from Christian practice.

The agitation of questions respecting the hidden counsels and nature of the Most High, has a peculiar tendency to gender strife; for in a case where correct knowledge is impossible to any, and where all are, in fact, in the wrong, there is but little likelihood of agreement; like men who should rashly venture to explore a strange land in utter dark-

ness, they will be scattered into a thousand devious paths.

Those who, having magnified into serious evils, by injudicious opposition, heresies in themselves insignificant, yet appeal to the magnitude of those evils to prove that their opposition was called for, act like unskilful physicians, who, when by violent remedies, they have aggravated a trifling disease into a dangerous one, urge the violence of the symptoms which they themselves have produced in justification of their practice.

Men are usually no less jealous of *names* than of things; it is therefore wise as well as charitable, not to insist, when the substance of truth is secured, on their adopting any form of stating it, offensive to them.

So important are words in influencing our thoughts, and so great is their ambiguity, that no caution can be too great in the use of language in religious discussions, if we would not lay the foundation of incurable and most mischievous perplexity.

He who in any discussion with those who differ from him, desires to unite the wisdom of the serpent

with the harmlessness of the dove, had better begin with the points of agreement, rather than of difference; and to point out, and give them full credit for whatever truths may belong to their system, instead of confining himself to its errors. For there cannot be any profitable discussion between parties, who, not agreed in *some* thing, have no common ground to stand upon. Who will admit the conclusion that has not admitted the premises? Moreover, falsehood can never gain assent except by being mixed up with some truth; like a poison disguised in some wholesome substance. And as truth cannot of itself lead to error, but only to other truths which legitimately follow from it, the most effectual way of decomposing (to use a chemical expression) such a mixture, is, to ascertain first, the true portion of it, and shew that this has no necessary connexion with the falsehood with which it has been combined.

The universal and constant liability, to forget in the heat of controversy every thing but the matter in debate, to think of nothing but of proving the present point, and to resort to any means of accomplishing the purpose in hand, regardless of the possibility of future mischiefs in a different quarter, is, when carried out into practice, a seeming violation of the command given to the Israelites in their

sieges, not to cut down trees which afford food for man, to construct their warlike engines ; but to keep sacred from the ravages of war, what would be useful in the future days of peace.

We should continually examine ourselves whether we are arguing for the love of truth, or the love of triumph.

There is perhaps no one cause that contributes to harden men in error, and in misconduct of any kind, than the dread that a confession of having been wrong, will be met by humiliating exultation.

It should not be forgotten, that while unity among Christians is an object so desirable that everything but truth should be sacrificed to it, it must after all depend on *others*, as much as on ourselves ; and our endeavours to promote it, may be completely defeated through their fault ; truth is a benefit—and a benefit of the first importance—to those who receive it themselves, even though they should have to lament its rejection by many others.

To labour for peace with man, is the Christian's duty ; to labour often vainly, is his appointed trial ; peace with God is his promised consolation ; and eternal peace will be his "exceeding great reward."

## XVI. PARTY-SPIRIT.

THE tendency of party-spirit has ever been to disguise, and propagate, and support error.

Party-*spirit* is the excess and perversion of a legitimate, limited social feeling, that may be designated party-*feeling* ; and, deriving itself from the same springs as the love of kindred or of country, though neither so sacred as the first of these, nor so noble as the second, is yet as natural as either.

As kindled brands, if left to themselves separately, would be soon extinct, but, when thrown together, burst into a blaze, so is every feeling heightened immeasurably in ardour by the union of men in parties.

Party-spirit enlists man's virtues in the cause of his vices.

He who would desire to have an accurate description of party-spirit, need only go through Paul's description of Charity, reversing every point in the detail.



If it be hard to *keep* clear, it is still harder to *become*, clear.of party.

The wish to think it justifiable to agree with, and adhere to, a party, is likely to bias a man's judgment, rather than to influence him contrary to his judgment.

The connexion of sound and erroneous views, resulting from their being both held by the same party, tends to establish and propagate error. In the usual adoption by each member of the doctrines, in the mass, whatever may chance to be *wrong* in this *set* of opinions and principles, is likely to pass unobserved, or to be disguised as to its real character, by its artificial connexion with so much that has been so long regarded as right.

Many a one is so far gone in party as to be *proof-proof*, and cares no more for facts than the Leviathan does for spears.

That preference of the means to the end, of the distinctions of a party to the truth, for the defence or promulgation of which it was originally formed, which is one grand characteristic of party-spirit, is like the sedulously guarding and keeping in repair

the fortifications of a city, while the city itself is suffered to fall into decay ; or, like the clinging to a standard, while the cause in which it was uplifted is forgotten.

Some men have but little fear either of lukewarmness or religious ignorance, in comparison of heterodoxy or dissent, and, careless whether their brethren be Christians provided they be not sectaries, would, as it were, condemn them to perish by famine, lest they should use unwholesome food. They say with the disciples, " We forbade him to cast out demons because he joined not with us."

Every now and then, a case occurs which affords (Bacon's) *experimentum crucis*, whether the truth a man actually holds, and for which there is good evidence, is held by him *on* evidence, and *as* truth, or as part of the creed of a party.

Nineteen twentieths are so biassed by party views, that what is communicated by them is, in respect of knowledge, a kind of negative quantity. It is a one-sided view, much more misleading than total ignorance ; and yet they give very often their own real impressions. Just as on an Irish jaunting car, the parties, sitting back to back, give at the end of

a tour, a faithful report of what they have seen, quite at variance with each other, having hardly caught even a glimpse of the same objects.

It is only when error is seen to be opposed, not because maintained by such and such persons, but because it *is* error, that it is seen that it is the love of truth, and not party-spirit, that influences to that opposition. It was thus that the Lord braved the *disappointment* of the Pharisees at His censures of *them*, after "He had put the Sadducees to silence."

The adoption by several persons of the same views on sincere conviction, and not in deference to one another's authority, is so far from constituting them a party that, on the contrary, party-spirit is most decidedly shewn in respect of those points wherein men, not coinciding in their judgments, make mutual sacrifices of their respective opinions, just as the Roman triumvir, each sacrificed some of his own friends to the joint proscription.

Men may be very wrong on the right side. Parties are apt to generate parties, because men's abhorrence of the extreme into which one party has been hurried leads them too often to form an oppo-

site party, that before long, rushes into an extreme on the opposite side.

General and indefinite adherence to a religious party, is a setting up man in the place of God—"Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," is the expression of precisely that sort of allegiance which is due to God and not to man. "Be not ye called master, for one is your Master, even Christ."

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#### XVII. THE SPIRIT OF PERSECUTION.

TRUTH is under a veil, and its proper aspect disguised, when supported by means which might equally support falsehood.

To employ force instead of sound reasons, in opposing religious error and infidelity, is to throw away the only weapons peculiar to truth, and the only ones that give truth an advantage, to take up those which can give it none.

The question, What religion is true? and the question as to the way in which the professors of a

religion we deem to be false should be treated, are often confounded.

It should never be forgotten that He who declared He could have called in the aid of "more than twelve legions of angels," and to whom "all power was given in heaven and in earth," sent forth His disciples not to *subjugate* or to *coerce*, but to "*teach* all nations."

Our Lord did not merely claim spiritual dominion, but He also *renounced* temporal—He declared not merely that His kingdom is of the *next* world, but that it is *not* of *this* world. And this He did, when on His trial before a Roman governor for *treason*,—for a design to subvert, or in some way interfere with, the established government. To this charge, it is plain Pilate understood Him to plead not guilty, and gave credit to His plea, amounting as it did to a renunciation of all secular coercion,—all forcible measures in behalf of His religion.

As the very Apostles who inculcated, without any express limitation or exception, submission to civic rulers, and though Pagans, described them as powers "*ordained* of God" for the punishment of evil-doers, yet taught men, both by precept and example, to

hold fast their faith in disobedience to the commands of the rulers ; it is manifest they must have meant, and their hearers must have understood them to mean, that the province of the *civil ruler is limited to secular concerns*. For civil magistrates, therefore, to employ their coercive power in the cause of Christianity is not, as some think, to act, as civil magistrates, on Christian principles, but rather to *cease* to act on them.

Men too often employ that violence in the cause of what they *believe* to be Divine truth, which Jesus Himself and His Apostles expressly forbade in the cause of what *they knew* to be Divine truth.

There is not *necessarily* anything of the character of persecution in doing violence to a man's conscience, for so long as false conscience, or an erroneous conscience is to be found, the plea of conscience would tend to the subversion of the whole fabric of society.

To refuse or withhold on religious grounds anything to which a man had no previously existing right, is not persecution ; but merely the exercise of the right of the person withholding to do what he "will with his own." It might indicate a disposi-

tion to persecute, but does not involve the principle of persecution.

The distinction between a *civil* or political right on the one hand, and a *moral* right on the other is of incalculable importance. By rights of conscience, is to be understood, not necessarily that every one is right in the religion that he adopts, but that his neighbours have no right to interfere with his right. A man has a right, not necessarily a moral right, but a civil right, to worship God according to his own conscience, without suffering any hardship at the hand of his neighbour for so doing.

There are no two things more often confounded, yet more perfectly distinct, than liberal tolerance and latitudinarian indifference.

A man may advocate the removal of *all* religious disabilities consistently, and on intelligible principles quite distinct from universal religious indifference; but to retain some by way of proclaiming that he is not indifferent, and yet to allow the removal of others, is plainly to proclaim indifference as to the latter.

Conscientious sincerity is friendly to tolerance as

latitudinarian indifference is to intolerance. He who is ready to profess what he does not believe, will see no reason why others should not do the same ; while he whose own conscience is tender, will be the more disposed to respect the conscience of another, and to admit it to be the duty of all men to act upon their own convictions, in that way in which he thinks it a duty to act upon his.

To defend the precluding any, on account of religion, from civil rights, on the ground that any master of a family assumes the right of requiring all the members of his household to profess the religion he thinks best, is to take for granted that each country *belongs* to its governor in the same manner as the house of any individual belongs to him.

As no tree is withered by the frost of the polar regions, or by the scorching winds of the Arabian deserts, because none can exist in those regions ; so there is no actual persecution in those countries where persecution has done its work, in crushing and preventing all resistance to religious error. Therefore, the absence of the *infliction* does not imply the absence of the *spirit* of persecution.

Persecution is not wrong because it is cruel ; but it is cruel because it is wrong.



As men feel insult more than injury, so even a complete general despotism, weighing down all classes without exception, is, in general, far more readily borne, than invidious distinctions drawn between a favoured and a depressed class of subjects. It is notorious accordingly, how much Sparta was weakened and endangered by the Helots ; and yet the Persian subjects of the great king had probably no larger share of civil rights, though they felt less galled by the restriction, because surrounded by those who equally with themselves were abject slaves of the one powerful despot.

To limit the term persecutor to one who persecutes the holders of a true religion, is, not only to render utterly vain all dissuasions from persecution, as every one will be sure to apply the term to his neighbour's belief and not to his own ; but it is also to attach no blame to persecution, but only to religious error ; for we cannot say that we blame a sovereign for killing or banishing one half of his subjects, if our meaning be that we blame him only for not deciding rightly *which* half it shall be.

As a narrow or a larger room is equally a prison if a man is forced to remain confined in it ; so the narrowing or the enlarging the bounds of orthodoxy does not constitute the absence, or the presence, of persecution.

A man cannot be said to be at *liberty*, or to exercise his own judgment, if another—however rightly—decide for him, if he is not left to himself to take which side of an alternative he thinks fit. To say that religious liberty does not imply irreligious liberty, is to say of a person that he is at liberty to remain within the walls of the prison, but not at liberty to leave it.

What! should we tolerate those who would extend no toleration to us? Yes; unless we are prepared to change, “*Whatsoever ye would, that men should do unto you,*” into “*whatsoever ye think that men would do unto you, even so do unto them.*”

The principle of persecution—besides being wholly at variance with the spirit of Christianity—acts also, as a kind of specific poison to sincere belief. Like a pestilential atmosphere, it makes gradual and imperceptible advances in debilitating the system, and tainting the inmost springs of life, more or less speedily, according to the constitution of each individual; and carries off its victims, one by one, without external blow, by a secret internal decay. For in proportion as men are accustomed to regard it as right that outward profession should be enforced, they will come to regard the inward belief,

which cannot be enforced, as insignificant. Conformity will be regarded as the great object, and truth as a matter we need not be concerned about.

To defend Christianity by penal laws, is most seriously to injure its cause, by weakening the force, and lessening the value, of two important branches of evidence. It is to impair, not only the confirmation afforded by concurrence of testimony of *voluntary* professors, but the still more important evidence, the *defiance* of contradiction; for it is but rational to believe what is not disproved, while we know that there are those abroad who are doing their utmost to disprove it, and that if there were any flaw in the evidence, it would be detected and proclaimed.

To attach secular advantages and disabilities to the profession or rejection of truth, is to superadd to the difficulties already in the way of an unbiassed judgment, the gratuitous, and still greater, hindrance of the dread of the imputation of unworthy and interested motives.

The kind of sovereignty which a political community possesses, and in which the exercise of coercive power is implied, as its proper and main

object, is the very circumstance which places beyond its proper province the very highest and noblest object of all. Pure morality, as existing in the motives, and sincere belief in a *true religion*, are precisely what cannot be produced, directly and immediately, by coercive power. "The quality of mercy is not strained;" and thus is it also with Christian faith, hope, and charity, and every moral virtue. Christianity is a religion of motives; and Legislative Enactments do not control motives.

Hypocrisy has been styled "the homage which vice renders to virtue;" but if virtue herself could be consulted, she would probably think the courteous custom "better honoured in the breach than the observance." No man who loves truth himself, can value another's professing truth, which is not truth to him.

An insincere pretender to moral virtue is a better member of society, though not a better man, than a barefaced profligate; but religious hypocrisy is an unmixed evil, and has no countervailing advantage; since an insincere profession of faith benefits no one, and only tends to cast a suspicion, when detected, on the sincerity of others.

Every man's religious persuasion must be defended—and can only be defended—by himself. To those who are not themselves earnest and vigilant, as no Divine aid is promised, so no *human* aid can be availing.

In *all* questions where there is a right or a wrong, several different parties cannot be all right. When all are forced into agreement on outward submission, what they submit to MAY conceivably be right.

But suppose it not? Then *all* are in the wrong; and truth and right have no chance at all to the end of time.

It is not given to the generality of men to perceive the ultimate inexpediency of coercion in each particular case; and therefore Christianity, often as its name has been blazoned on the banners of the persecutor—Christianity, truly understood, and honestly applied, is the only permanently effectual preventive of the spirit of persecution.

As the principle of persecution has its source, not in this or that doctrinal system, but in human nature, so nothing can give security against it but the implantation of Christian principle,—that only principle which is able to purify, to renovate, to convert that nature; in short, to create “the new man.”

### XVIII. REGARD TO SEEMING EXPEDIENCY.

1. *Pious Frauds.* 2. *Reserve and double Doctrine.*
3. *Modern Theory of Development.*

#### 1. *Pious Frauds.*

THE greatest obstacle to the following of truth, is the tendency to look, in the first instance, to the *expedient*.

The votary of a religion built on faith in the truth ought to adhere scrupulously to truth, in the means he employs in the furtherance of it, as well as the end he proposes, and to follow fearlessly *wherever* truth may lead.

He may be a sincere believer in the usefulness of what he advocates, who yet may not be a believer in its truth.

"Honesty is the best policy;" but he who acts on that principle is not an honest man.

To make expediency the road to truth, is the sin which most easily besets the instructor of others; and the more easily, because he that does not begin

by teaching what he thoroughly believes, will speedily end by believing what he teaches.

The fullest conviction of the truth of the cause in which we may be engaged, is no security against our sliding into falsehood; unless we are sedulous in forming and cherishing a habit of loving, and renouncing, and strictly adhering to, truth.

That union of conscientiousness in respect of the end, and unscrupulous dishonesty as to the means, which constitutes what is called "a pious fraud," is not peculiar to the members of any church; is not peculiar to an erroneous belief as to what is a good end; is not peculiar to any sect, age, or country—to any subject-matter, religious or secular, but is the spontaneous growth of the corrupt soil of man's heart.

It is important to remember that pious frauds fall naturally into two classes of positive and negative: the one, the introduction and propagation of what is false; the other, the mere toleration of it. A plant may be in a garden from two causes, either from being planted designedly, or being found there and left there. In either case some degree of approbation is implied. He who propagates a delusion,

and he who connives at it, when already existing, both alike tamper with truth.

We must neither *lead*, nor *leave*, men to mistake falsehood for truth.

The giving, or not correcting, false reasons for right conclusions—false grounds for right belief—false principles for right practice ; the holding forth, or fostering, false consolations, false encouragements, and false sanctions, or conniving at their being held forth or believed, are all pious frauds.

When men cannot, or will not, admit sound arguments for a true conclusion, to give them unsound ones, is like the countervailing fraud of meeting an unjust demand of a debt, never incurred, by forging a receipt.

Some men, provided others come to a right conclusion, care not how they come at it.

Nothing is more common among the indolent and thoughtless, than to resort to falsehood as a compendious way of managing and controlling children, of evading disagreeable questions, and satisfying their doubting minds ; thus serving a present turn at




the expense, not only of veracity, but of tenfold ultimate inconvenience to those who employ the artifice, and of moral injury to the deceived. As reasonably might one expect habits of neatness from one who has been reared in a pig sty with swine, as a frank, open, unsuspecting love of truth from him, who has been made first the dupe, and, afterwards, the imitator of falsehood.

The pious fraud which leads, or leaves men to look for temporal rewards and punishments as the sanctions of a religion the Author and Finisher of which was crucified, and His disciples persecuted, must have as its natural consequence the producing a general distrust of Providence, when it is found that pestilences, shipwrecks, conflagrations, &c., make no distinction between the pious and the impious.

To say anything, however true of itself, of which we have not a hearty conviction at the moment, breeds a habit of insincerity.

He who accustoms himself to dispense with complete sincerity, for the sake of supposed utility, and to support true conclusions by any premises that offer, will soon lose the power of distinguishing what conclusions are true.



Those who accommodate Christianity to corrupt human nature, instead of gaining those whom they strive to conciliate, are in danger of losing their own faith: Thy are like the man who boasted of having "caught a Tartar," when the fact was that the Tartar had *caught him*.

To advance false premises, no matter how true the conclusion may be to which they lead, or knowingly adduce unsound arguments, however important may be the conviction to be produced by them, is an affront put on the Spirit of truth; a hiring of the Syrians to fight the battles of the Lord God of Israel.

No mixture of evil is ever necessary for any really good purpose; and those who act as if it were, are really doing evil that good may come.

That is a dangerous cant, now-a-days heard so often—"There is *some* truth in so and so; and therefore it is the *mission* of him who holds it *though mixed* with much error, to propagate the belief of his doctrines." *Some* truth! yes; the serpent had some truth in what he said; the forbidden tree *was* a tree of knowledge. And there was some truth in Eve's reflections. It *was* "pleasant to the eye" and de-

sirable "to make one wise." Here was the love of the beautiful and of knowledge in the very first sin which was committed.

The much that is good and true in any system, only enables the much that is evil and false to gain the greater currency.


Many have begun in wilful deceit to end in superstitious belief. They first themselves shape "the image of the beast," and then apply to the false prophet to make it "speak and live." The very curse sent on those who do not love the truth is that of "strong delusion that they should believe a lie."

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## XVIII. REGARD TO SEEMING EXPEDIENCY.

### 2. *Reserve and double Doctrine.*

As the true sense of each word is that which is understood by it, (otherwise language would completely fail of the very object for which language exists,—viz., to convey an intelligible meaning,) it cannot make any difference in point of veracity, whe-



ther a man says that which is untrue in every sense, or that which, though in a certain sense true, yet is false in the sense in which he knows it will be understood.

How incalculable is the injury to the cause of truth, from that system of reserve and double doctrine, which adopts and avows the principle that a man "may say one thing while he aims at accomplishing a different thing;" that he "may make belief it is "bread" he is shewing, when, as the saying is, it is really a "stone;" that "he may say what looks like truth, rather than what is true;" that "he may take all words in different senses, and take any sense for the purpose of victory." The exhibition of such Jesuitical morality, which makes pious fraud consistent with Christian virtue, is likely to endanger the faith both of those who are, and of those who are not, themselves of an open and honest disposition. Those who have a disdain of every kind of disingenuousness and double dealing, will turn in indignant disgust from the Gospel, against which their moral sentiments will have thus been excited; and this in proportion as these sentiments are just, and elevated, and pure. And though their procedure is indeed justly censurable, in not examining for themselves what the religion is before they reject it; yet

this does not lessen the responsibility of those who place such a stumbling-block in another's path. "Woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh." And those again of a lower tone of morality, who confine the term "vice" to intemperate sensuality and the like (which though the Tempter is ready to seduce men into, are yet not so truly parts of his own character, not so completely satanic as falsehood and fraud) will be encouraged to make profession of what they do not believe, and of what they suspect their teachers to believe as little.

The dishonesty of a double meaning, a design hidden, while apparently disavowed, in order to serve a present purpose, is akin to the stratagem of the ancient architect employed by one of the Ptolemies to build a magnificent lighthouse; and who, being ordered to put thereon an inscription in honour of the king, and coveting such a record for himself, made the inscription on a plaister resembling stone, but of perishable substance; so that the next generation saw *another* inscription recording the name, not of the king, but of the architect which had been secretly engraved on the durable stone below.

To perceive and censure the disingenuousness of the system of Reserve, and yet continue to speak of

its advocates with admiration and gratitude, for their alleged services to the Church in respect of certain rites and forms, is to become a wilful abettor of known falsehood ; and to make the "tithes of mint, and rue, and cummin," a kind of set off against the neglect of "the weightier matters of the law"—against moral as well as doctrinal taint.

The advocates of Reserve among us, who speak of an ordinary reader being likely to "miss their real meaning by not being aware of the peculiar sense in which they employ terms," are not without their counterparts. The German Transcendentalists, whose system of Theology, or rather of Atheology, is little else than a new edition of the Pantheism of the ancient Heathen Philosophers, of the Brahmins, and the Buddhists, use a similar double-meaning language. They profess to believe that Christianity came from God, in the same sense in which *everything* comes from God ; they teach the incarnation, explaining to the initiated that this means the presence of the Deity, *i. e.*, of the "spiritual principle" which pervades the universe,—the God of Pantheism in *man generally*, as well as in *all other* animals ; and they profess a belief in man's immortality—that is, that the *human species* will never become extinct, &c. Let any one compare together these two systems, (if

indeed they are to be reckoned as two,) and say, whether there is *any greater violence done to the ordinary sense of words by the one than by the other*; and what limit is there to such insincerity? Even supposing, therefore, that all the disciples of the school in question do inwardly believe in the truth of Christianity, they cannot give any sufficient assurance that they do so. A suppression of Gospel truth is virtually a falsification of it.

There is a gradual instruction by which a judicious teacher imparts knowledge with due regard to the age, understanding, previous acquirements, opportunities, and other circumstances of the learners, in proportion as they are able to bear it; knowing that, practically speaking, all truth is relative, and that a statement of any doctrine true to one man, may, in effect, be false to another if it be such as cannot but lead him to form false notions. This gradual instruction is not to be confounded with the system of withholding any portion of God's truth from those able and willing to receive it—the system of shunning to “declare the whole counsel of God;” the “double doctrine,” the suppression or “Reserve” of the fundamental truths of Christianity, as a secret to be imparted only to a select few, and to be kept back from the great mass of the people.

He who does not teach all men as well as he can, acts as if he were the steward not "of the mysteries of God" but of *his own*.

It is important to observe that wherever Paul characterizes the Christian religion, or any part of it by the word "Mystery," he is directing attention not to the *concealment* but the *disclosure* of the mystery, and conveying the idea that it is something which "now is made manifest," and which we are therefore called upon to contemplate and study, even as his office was "to *make known* the mystery of the Gospel." Not that he meant to imply that we are able fully to understand the Divine dispensations; but it is not *in reference* to this, their inscrutable character, that he calls them mysteries, not *so far forth as* they are hidden and unintelligible; but *so far as* they are *revealed* and *explained*.

God has not authorized *man* to suppress any part of what He has revealed; and it is impious presumption even to inquire into the expediency of such a procedure.

The advocates of Reserve in teaching appeal to our Lord's example, who, they say taught openly in parables, and expounded those parables only to His



own disciples. But this can be no justification of it, when it is remembered that our Lord concealed the meaning of His parables only from those who, with the evidence of His miracles before them, refused to acknowledge Him as a "teacher sent from God;" while it is from Christian men—from those who have enrolled themselves already as His disciples—that the full explanation of some of the essential doctrines of His religion is withheld by this system. But even such concealment as He practised was not to continue longer than the period of His own personal ministry, for He expressly commands, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops."

It must not be forgotten that though the Divine Author and Finisher of our faith said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" yet He did, by His Spirit, gradually impart this knowledge, not to some subsequent generation, but to those very individuals. And in that which Paul says, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it: neither yet now are ye able;" he evidently implies a hope that they—those very individuals—*will* be able to bear it. The very similitude of *babes*,

indeed of itself draws our attention, our hopes, and our endeavours towards a progressive growth into manhood.

The Great Teacher knew indeed what portion of His truth is exactly suited for each generation of mankind; and when, and how far, imperfect knowledge may be given, without necessarily leading those who receive it into error. But with us it is otherwise. We are in the condition of ignorant men to whom some sage physician has imparted, for the benefit of others, a medicine curiously compounded according to rules of art with which we are unacquainted. Is it not madness, then, to say, that because the physician himself has formerly in his own practice, when dealing with other patients, sometimes omitted some of the ingredients of that medicine, therefore, *we* are justified in leaving out some part of the compound when we please, and yet still calling it his remedy? The medicine, surely, may be as much changed by omitting some ingredients as by adding others.

To postpone, *sine die*, the communication of religious knowledge, on the plea that men, through ignorance, weakness or prejudice are not yet ripe for it, is to expect them to become ripe, like the fruits of the earth, by mere *waiting*.

The teacher who, while holding himself bound not to *add on* to Scripture anything he does *not* believe to be true, hesitates not to suppress any portion of Gospel truth at his pleasure, misplaces his scruple as absurdly as the man who would not worship a moulded image, though he would a sculptured one, as not contemplated in the commandment against *making* an image, because it is not "made;" the artist having *added* nothing, but merely taken away.

For all the consequences of what God has been pleased to do, man is not responsible; but man *is* responsible for all the consequences of what he presumes to do in altering His arrangements.

He who holds the double doctrine, the esoteric and exoteric, professing the principle that it is allowable and right to have one Gospel for the mass of the people, and another for the initiated few, and is believed in that profession, need not wonder to find that he is thenceforward believed in *nothing else*. Let it be once understood that a man wears a mask, all persons will form their own conjectures as to what is under it.

Those who imagine that the scholastic divinity, in which are things quite beyond the mass of the people, and which it would be utterly idle even to

attempt to teach them, is an essential part of the Gospel, will not easily avoid being forced to allow the necessity of a double doctrine. But this is rather another reason for condemning all presumptuous speculations and metaphysical theories of Christianity—all of them equally; for there is nothing more characteristic of the Gospel dispensation than its oneness—one Lord, one faith, one hope,—in short, one and the same Gospel, proposed to the poor, and to the learned, to all who will heartily receive it—“I thank Thee, O Father,” said our Lord, “that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed them unto babes.*” And again, He says to the humble fishermen who followed Him, “Many prophets and kings have desired to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” And what they did hear and learn from Him in private, those things He charged them to publish from “the house tops.”

It is a point of the highest importance, towards our belief in the Christian religion, that we should regard it as suited to all mankind, because otherwise it cannot be a true revelation. The systems of Aristotle or Plato, of Newton or Locke, may, conceivably, be very true, although the mass of mankind cannot comprehend them, because they were

never intended for the mass of mankind : but Jesus Himself did certainly intend His religion for high and low, rich and poor ; for His command was to “go preach the Gospel to every creature,” and He applied to His mission the prophecy, “To the poor the gospel is preached ;” and therefore, if it be not one which the lower ranks of society are *capable* of embracing, He, the founder of it, must have been mistaken in His calculation—must have been ignorant, either of the character of His own religion, or of the nature of man ; which would of course imply that he could not have been Divinely inspired.

That system of “Reserve,” which teaches that the doctrine of the Atonement, the divinity of Christ, and other fundamental parts of the Gospel, should be kept back from the mass of the people, has no sanction whatever from the Scriptures. For whatever Paul *does* mean by “the wisdom” which he spoke among “the perfect,” or “the strong meat” which he did not give to babes, he certainly does *not* mean these essential doctrines ; since he fully propounds these doctrines in the very epistles from which these passages are cited. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, for example, he expressly tells us that, among those who were “yet carnal,”

and whom he had fed with milk, he had "determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and *Him crucified*," and that he had "delivered unto them *first of all* that Christ *died for our sins*;" and, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he insists largely upon the divinity of Christ to those whom he, at the same time, declares to be such as "have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Indeed, so plainly are these doctrines set forth in the Scriptures, that it is only by abstaining from the reading of them that it is *possible* to keep them out of sight. And therefore the system of "Reserve" has a great tendency to discourage the study of the Bible. Men may succeed in persuading others to keep back something of the counsel of God; but as long as the Apostles and Evangelists are permitted to bear their testimony, we shall still find them preaching without reserve Christ crucified, and such preaching will still be "a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish;" and we shall have to meet them "witnessing to small and great," and plainly setting the whole truth before all men, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." May every Christian teacher, who loves the truth, go and do likewise.

The preaching of the truth will not produce its

appropriate effects, unless the *whole* truth is preached, as well as nothing but the truth.

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### XVIII. REGARD TO SEEMING EXPEDIENCY.

#### 3. *Modern Theory of Development.*

IN its etymological sense, truth signifies that which the speaker "trows" or believes to be the fact ; and therefore it has been contended that it is idle to speak of eternal or immutable truth. Upon this ground, it would be just as absurd to speak of sending a letter by the "post," because a post in its primary sense is a pillar ; or to admit that "sycophant" can ever mean anything but "fig-shewer."

The character of the Gospel is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Temporary or local circumstances are the cause, not of any article being, or not being, a part of the Christian faith ; but of its being a part which it is needful, or not needful, to set forth prominently.

A modern use of the word "inspiration" is very

large, indeed, in its application ; so large, that a person who did not scruple using it in the sense thus given to it, might turn *Robinson Crusoe*, or the *Arabian Nights*, into allegories about religion, and then speak of them as “divinely inspired ;” meaning that they *might be made* to afford religious instruction, and were *providentially* so written as to be capable of that particular application, though it was never intended by the writers. Now people will be apt to suspect that those who speak of “the whole Bible” as “one great parable,” to be expounded mystically and allegorically, even in the plainest narratives and arguments, and as having as many meanings as a “pious” fancy can find for its words;—do in reality entertain, at bottom, much the same opinion of Scripture as of *Robinson Crusoe*, or the *Arabian Nights*. For any book at all may be made to yield a profitable meaning, if we ourselves first put that meaning into it, and choose to consider it as “a great parable” of something that we have not learned from it, but have known already by some other means.

There are many now who, while professing belief in the Divinity of Christianity, yet mix up with it other ideas which virtually nullify that belief. “Christ,” they will say, “was an inspired prophet,



and so was Mahomet, and Dante, and Luther, and Milton, and a multitude of others. They had all the Divine spark within them—all had great missions to accomplish," &c. And thus the ideas of genius and of Divine inspiration are confused together; and by raising others to the level of the Founder of our faith, they virtually degrade Him. They thus imitate the trick of Morgiana in the *Forty Thieves*, who, when she perceived *one* door marked with red chalk, immediately marked all those on each side, so that the mark ceased to be a distinction.

Erratum in some Modern Theories:—for *'development* of gospel-scheme, read *depravation*—human additions to a *divine* revelation.

To Christianity, as a revelation *complete* in our Sacred Books, both the Neologist and the Tractite, more or less openly, confess their objection.

The Christian religion is an *historical* religion, not merely connected with, but *founded* on, certain recorded events—the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Saviour, the pouring out of His spirit, &c. Strictly speaking, the Gospel is the *annunciation* of what God has done for man. The Lord

Jesus accomplished what He left His apostles to testify of, and to explain : He offered up Himself on the cross that they might teach the atoning virtue of His sacrifice ; He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, that they might declare the great mystery of His divine and human nature, and preach that faith in Him by which His followers hope to be raised and to reign with Him.

The Mosaic Dispensation was the dawn of "the day-spring from on high," not yet arrived—of a sun only about to rise : it was a revelation in itself imperfect. The sun of the Gospel arose,—“the True Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” appeared ; but it was partially hidden, and is so still, by a veil of clouds,—by prejudices of various kinds,—by the passions, and infirmities, and ignorance of mankind. We may advance, and we may lead others to advance, indefinitely, in full development of Gospel truth,—of the real character and meaning and design of Christ’s religion ; not by seeking to superadd something to the Gospel-revelation, but by a more correct and fuller comprehension of it ; not by increasing absolutely the light of the noon-day sun, but by clearing away the mists which obscure our view. Christianity itself cannot

be improved; but men's views and estimate, and comprehension of Christianity, may be indefinitely improved.

Increased understanding of the written Word, a more and more full development of what the Evangelists and Apostles have conveyed to us, are to be attained without adding to the Gospel. But we cannot be too much on our guard against the delusions of those who go so far as to represent the Revelation of the Christian scheme, contained in the New Testament, as a mere imperfect and uncompleted outline; and who, while exulting in their imagined progress in Christian knowledge through a fancied development, are, in reality, straying into other paths, and following a bewildering meteor.


To take (as proposed by Coleridge) a man's feeling of the suitableness of Christianity to his wants, not as a confirmation of other evidences of the religion, but as a complete substitute for them, is to forget that, doubtless, many of the Mahometans perceived this suitableness in their own religion, and many of the Hindoos in theirs. The grossest superstitions have often proved satisfying and soothing to the ignorant devotee. No corrupt religion could

ever have arisen at all, or have been received, if those who introduced it, and their followers, had not found a "want" of some such system.

Those modern theorists who rest all on subjective feelings and inward emotions, to the exclusion of objective evidence—who make the truth of Christianity dependent upon the subjective suitability, and not on the objective credibility, of the Revelation, should be reminded that this is not only a setting up of each man for himself to be the standard of divine truth, but that, as respects the taste and the wants upon the suitability to which the evidence of the Gospel is made to depend, the wants are such as are made known to us by the Gospel only; and the taste such as the Gospel does not usually find, but implant in the human mind.

The subjective evidences of Christianity are indeed a confirmation, but a confirmation rather the reward of faith, accompanied by obedience, than the foundation on which to build it. "If any man *will* do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

That kind of evidence which *all* Christians ought to have, that the Gospel does meet the nature and



the real wants of man, is obtained not by rejecting evidence, and resolving to conform their religious belief to their own tastes and inclinations; but, on the contrary, by striving to conform their own tastes and inclinations to their religious belief.

Suppose some one should offer to several persons, suffering under a painful and dangerous disease, some medicine which he declared would relieve their sufferings, and restore them to health; it would be natural and reasonable for them to ask for some testimony or other proof, to assure them of this, before they made trial of the medicine: then, suppose them to be so far convinced,—some by one proof, and some by another,—as to make trial of the medicine; and that they found themselves daily getting better as they took it: they would then have—all of them—an evidence from experience, confirming the former proofs that had originally brought them to make the trial. Just so, different persons may have been led by different kinds of proof to embrace the Gospel; but when they have embraced it, they may all hope for this confirmation of their faith, by the further proof from experience.

But—to use the same comparison—as those persons who had taken the medicine, if they were wise, would be convinced of its virtues, not from its being

immediately pleasant to the taste, or from its suddenly exciting and cheering them up, like a strong cordial; but from its gradually restoring their strength, and removing the symptoms of the disease, and advancing them daily towards perfect health; so also Christian experience does not consist in violent transports, or any kind of sudden and overpowering impressions on the feelings, though such may be experienced; but in a steady, habitual, and continual improvement of the heart and the conduct. And this is the Christian experience alluded to in the New Testament Scriptures; which thus afford an additional internal evidence of these having been written by sober-minded men. For the test they refer to is "a growth in grace and knowledge,"—a "bringing forth fruit with patience." For "patience," says St. Paul, "worketh experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

To say that Conscience, and not Reason, is the judge of truth in religious matters, is to forget that since men really *cannot* believe or disbelieve without something that comes before the mind as *proof*, the first dictate of a sound conscience would be to examine that evidence carefully, lest we should be deceived; so that following Conscience in this sense would

come to the same thing as following Reason. But what some modern teachers mean by Conscience is certain "feelings of awe, and reverence, and admiration," which they are pleased to call by that name; and the course which they mean to recommend is taking for evidence of the *truth* of a religious system its apparent fitness for gratifying such feelings, flinging yourself into it with unhesitating truth; and, if found to fail in satisfying your religious sentiments, then, and not till then, another is to be tried. But what is the meaning of all this? You are to pass on, it seems, from one to another and higher system; but still the moral and religious feelings may be, and probably are, but imperfectly developed. The infant judge of truth may have cast off its swaddling-bands, and yet be only in short coats. In a third stage, it may gain more manly attire; and yet, even after that, a thousand more seemly forms of clothing may await its growing limbs. Who knows but in the end it may outgrow them all? Naked it came forth from its mother's womb, and naked it may return. May not, if these notions be correct, Pantheism or Atheism be the final issue (as we know it actually has been in many instances) of such a development of man's moral and religious feelings?

We cannot hope for the Apostle's consolatory trust of being "free from the blood of all men," un-

less, like him, we declare "the whole counsel of God," and nothing as a part of the Christian faith, *but* the counsel of God.

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#### THE TRUE ALONE THE EXPEDIENT.

So long as we acknowledge truth to be in itself stronger than falsehood, it can never be true expediency to resort to any means that, by tending to put them on a level, must be on the whole less favourable to the cause of truth than of error.

The erroneousness of the views which fraud or force is used to oppose, or the soundness of those that either is used to support, does not lessen the danger or the evil of employing it. "Will ye," says Job, "speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for Him."

Nothing but the right can ever be the expedient, since that can never be true expediency which would sacrifice a greater good to a less,—“For what shall it *profit* a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

The good effects resulting, at least, *apparently* re-



sulting, from every false system, have a continual and rapid tendency towards decay; while the evil fruits are borne in continually increasing profusion, and with more and more of poisonous luxuriance.

All frauds, like the "wall daubed with untempered mortar," with which men think to buttress up an edifice, always tend to the decay of the system they are devised to support.

It is only to the pure in heart who love truth for its own sake, that it is given to see its expediency.

The maxim that "Honesty is the best policy" can never be to any one the habitual and constant guide of conduct. He who is honest is always *before* it; and he who is not, will often be far behind it.

The *expediency* of truth can be estimated by few, but its intrinsic loveliness by all who, in undoubting faith and firm reliance on their great Master, reject disguise, and sophistry, and equivocation, at once, as hateful to Him; and who, as becomes Christian faith, walk boldly forward in the path of duty, though the point to which it leads may not be perceptible at every turn; looking for all needful aid to that sanctifying, and enlightening, and supporting grace,

which alone can raise to life "the dead in sin," and purify man's corrupt nature, and effectually open his eyes to the truth, and cause him to receive "the truth in the love of it;" and strengthen the feeble knees to walk in the way of truth.

Courage, liberality, activity, and other good qualities are often highly prized by those who do not possess them in any great degree; but the zealous thorough-going love of truth is not very much admired, or liked, or indeed understood, except by those who possess it. There is nothing "covered," however, that shall not be "revealed," nor "hid," that shall not be "known;" and He to whom all hearts are open shall one day, by the brightness of His presence, clear away all obscurity, and dispel all falsehood and delusion; and the genuine and fearless lover of truth, who has sought not "the praise of men," but the praise of God who seeth in secret, shall be sanctified through His truth here, and by Him be rewarded openly hereafter.

### III.

#### ON THE MORAL FACULTY.

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THE able and celebrated Dr. Paley, with other writers not few or obscure, maintains that man has no moral faculty whatever, feels naturally no disapprobation of ingratitude or approbation of gratitude, nor perceives any distinction between virtue and vice. All our notions, according to Paley, of what is called moral obligation, are derived from conformity to the will of a superior Being, with a view solely to our own eventual interest. And the distinction, accordingly, between what are commonly called moral precepts—things commanded because right—and positive precepts—things right because commanded—he completely does away. Now this notion that the commands of God, as delivered in Scripture, are the sole foundation of morality—the reference to the Divine will, the only standard of right and wrong—tends inevitably to derogate from

God's honour, and to deprive the Christian revelation of its just evidence. Since to praise the pure morality of the Gospel, if the Gospel itself be the source from which we derive all our ideas of morality, is merely attributing to the Gospel the praise of being conformable to the rules derived from itself; and to call the will of God right and good, if our original ideas of righteousness and goodness imply a conformity to the divine will; is, in fact, no more than saying, that the will of God is the will of God. And this renders one, in particular, of our Lord's declarations, and a most important one, unintelligible and utterly absurd. "The servant who knew not His Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." For, while most persons would readily understand the rule, that he who *knew* His Lord's will, and did it not, should receive heavier punishment; the rule that one who "*knew not* his Lord's will," *i. e.*, who had not received any express command, could commit things worthy of stripes, is utterly inconceivable on the supposition of men's notions of right and wrong being derived originally and entirely from a knowledge of the will of God. They are indeed derived from His will in the true sense that it was His will to create man a being endowed with a moral faculty.

God has *not* revealed to us in the Scriptures a system of morality such as would have been needed for beings who had no other means of distinguishing right and wrong. On the contrary, the inculcation of virtue and reprobation of vice in Scripture, are in such a tone as seems to pre-suppose a natural power, or a capacity for acquiring the power, to distinguish them. And if a man, denying or renouncing all claims of natural conscience, should practise without scruple everything he did not find expressly forbidden in Scripture, and think himself not bound to do anything that is not there expressly enjoined, exclaiming at every turn,

“Is it so written in the Bond?”

he would be leading a life very unlike what a Christian should be.

There is no moral formula more frequently cited, and with more deserved admiration, than that maxim, of doing to others as we would have them do to us; and, as Paley observes, no one probably ever was in practice led astray by it. Yet if we imagine this maxim placed before a being destitute of all moral faculty, and attempting to learn, from this, what morality is, he would evidently interpret it as implying, that we are to do whatever we should *wish* for, if in another's place; which would lead to innu-

merable absurdities, and in many cases to absolute impossibilities; since, in many cases, our conduct will affect two or more parties, whose wishes are at variance with each other. A judge, for instance, before whom there might be a cause to be tried, would feel that both parties wished, each, for a decision in his own favour; which would be manifestly impossible. But, in practice, every one feels that what he is bound to do, is not necessarily what would be agreeable to his *inclinations*, were he in the other's place, but what he would think he might *justly* and *reasonably* expect. Now this very circumstance implies his having already a notion of what is just and reasonable. The use he is to make of the formula, is, not for the acquiring of these general principles, but for the *application* of them, in those cases where self-interest would be the most likely to blind him. And so as regards moral conduct generally, our Lord and His apostles do, indeed, warn men against the particular faults to which they are especially liable, and urge on them the practice of whatever duties they were the most likely to neglect: they bring forward strong motives for holiness of life such as no human systems or precepts could afford, and they hold out promises of such heaven-sent support and aid as human weakness needs; but they always evidently proceed on

the supposition that men do use (and always have used) such words as "virtue" and "vice," and have always attached some meaning to those words, and understand that the one is preferable to the other.

Dr. Paley makes all our ideas of the difference between virtue and vice consist in this, that the one will be rewarded and the other punished by the Almighty in the next world, and the only influencing consideration to an act of prudence or virtue to be our gain or loss. And he goes on to say, that those who have no knowledge or belief of a future state, must frame the best theory of virtue they can for themselves, unless they can shew that virtue produces the greatest amount of happiness in this world. This is to say that sin does not lead to suffering because it is sin, but that it is sin because it leads to suffering; and it follows that the ignorance or disbelief of a future state not only absolves from all moral obligation, but destroys even the very idea of moral obligation, resolving it all into submission from views of self-interest, to arbitrary physical force. And this theory does away with what, in a great degree, distinguishes man from the brute creation. For on this supposition, the brutes, as capable of being incited by reward and deterred by

punishment, would be as much moral agents as man. And yet no one thinks of applying the terms "sin" or "crime" to a brute, any more than we apply the term "folly" to the acts of animals destitute of reason. But in truth, as Bishop Butler has justly remarked, "What renders any one justly liable to punishment, is, not the expectation of it, but the violation of a known duty."

So far is the Moral Faculty from being anything hostile to religion, or a pretended substitute for it, that, on the contrary, it is by this only that it is possible to perceive that God is not merely a ruler, who is able to enforce obedience, but who is justly entitled to obedience, and a proper object of our gratitude and love. Had man no natural principle of preference for benevolence rather than malice, and had he been left to derive from a bare contemplation of the created universe his notions of the moral attributes of the Deity, he could not come to the conclusion that God is infinitely benevolent. The admixture of evil in His works, which we cannot account for, would stand in the way of such a conclusion. If man really were a being destitute of all moral sentiment—all innate and original admiration for goodness, he would in that case be more likely to come to the conclusion (as many of the heathens



seem actually to have done) that the Deity was a being of a mixed or of a capricious nature ; an idea, which shocking as it is to every well-constituted mind, would not be so in the least to such a mind as this supposition, of the destitution of all moral sentiment, attributes to the whole human race. To illustrate this argument a little further, let us suppose a tasteful architect, and a rude savage, to be both contemplating a magnificent building, unfinished, or partially fallen to ruin ; the one, not being at all able to comprehend the complete design, nor having any taste for its beauties if perfectly exhibited, would not attribute any such design to the author of it, but would suppose the prostrate columns and rough stones to be as much designed as those that were erect and perfect : the other would sketch out, in his own mind, something like the perfect structure of which he beheld only a part ; and though he might not be able to explain how it came to be unfinished or decayed, would conclude that some such design was in the mind of the builder ; though this same man, if he were contemplating a mere rude heap of stones which bore *no* marks of design at all, would not in *that* case draw such a conclusion.—So also a friend whose worth and discretion we fully rely on, will sometimes adopt a measure which, on that very ground, we presume

the right one, before we have sufficient knowledge of particulars to judge of the case itself. But we should be surprised to have it inferred from this, that our estimate of his character universally, was nothing but a blind partiality, and that we had no notion of what are good or bad measures, except as they are, or are not, his. Nor is there any blameable presumption in the creature forming those judgments respecting the moral nature of the Creator which He has expressly directed us to form. "Are not," says He, "my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? And why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right?"

If there be, independent of revelation, and irrespective of the arbitrary will of a Superior Being, no faculty of forming any notion of virtue and vice, how did the heathen moralists arrive at such as are set forth in Aristotle's *Treatise of Ethics*? The simple fact alone of the existence of this work, omitting as it does all mention of future retribution, and all reference to the will of the Deity, is sufficient to refute completely the assertion, that unassisted reason cannot furnish us with any knowledge of duty, and of the distinction between right and wrong.

If the Author of the Universe, and the Author of


Christianity, the Giver of reason and revelation, be, as we contend, the same Being, it is to be expected that the declarations of His will, which we meet with in revelation, should correspond with the dictates of the highest and most perfect reason ; and the testimony of the heathen moralists affords proof that such is the fact : and thus, this conformity of the morality of the ancient heathens, in all the most fundamental points, to the morality of the Gospel, furnishes an independent and unexceptionable testimony in favour of the Gospel. And this testimony, drawn from their general coincidence, is still more established by their differences in so many points. For all the peculiarities of the Gospel-morality appear manifestly, on an attentive inspection, to consist not in departures from, not in contradiction to, natural morality ; but in the connection, completion, and exaltation, of what had been laid down by human moralists. As far as any moralist has fallen short of the Gospel precepts, or been at variance with them, so far has he been inconsistent with his own principles, rightly considered and duly followed up. The forgiveness of injuries might be proved to a candid heathen to be more magnanimous upon his own principles, than revenge.

Strong as is the evidence for the truth of Chris-

tianity, from its general agreement with the *moral* systems which men have devised, it is still more confirmed by its disagreement with all their *religious* systems. Having the power to so great a degree of ascertaining the nature of virtue, and its conduciveness to happiness in this life, they would, one might have supposed, have been naturally led to conclude, that, if the same God be the Author and the Governor of this world and the next, such a course of behaviour as, generally speaking, leads to the greatest and most exalted enjoyment, should coincide, in most respects, with that which the Deity prescribes as tending to the happiness of the other world. Now as no system of religion devised by man, exhibits this conformity, but, on the contrary, prescribes means of attaining the favour of the Deity totally unconnected with, if not wholly adverse to, man's welfare in this world; and as in the Christian religion that course of life which is most fitted to promote man's welfare in this world, is presented as necessary to secure the Divine favour, and the promised happiness of the next world; this alone is a presumption that the Author of this world is, indeed, the Author of our religion—a presumption strengthened by finding, that the defect in their religious systems did not arise from their incapacity to perceive the character of virtue, or of its tendency to increase human happiness in this life.

The strong and independent testimony borne to the doctrine that human nature is corrupt, by a comparison of the heathen moralists with the heathen historians, turns that which some Christians, as well as infidels, seem to regard as one of the burdens which Christianity has to support, into one of the bulwarks of evidence which sustain it. When we find the very same things which the Bible proclaims as well pleasing to God acknowledged by them to be, in themselves, right and good, while they also acknowledge man is of himself too weak to practise them, we see man himself bearing witness to the purity of the Divine laws, to the corruption of his own nature, and to the need he has of a Redeemer and Sanctifier; and when we consider the discrepancy of philosophical principles of morality with the absurdities and wickedness of the pagan religions, and the agreement of those same principles with the precepts of the Gospel (that Gospel which was preached by unlearned fishermen), we have the heathens themselves testifying, as it were, that their religions do not proceed from the God of Nature, and that ours does.

The deficiency of the heathen systems of morality was in their lack of those motives which the Gospel supplies, and of that Divine support and aid which is promised to the sincere Christian. A heathen



moralist was like the fabled Prometheus of old, who is said to have fashioned a complete and well-formed human body, but could not endue it with the principle of *life*, till he had gone up to heaven to fetch down a vivifying fire from thence.

## IV.

### ON FAITH AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE.

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As there is no inconsistency in that training of a child by a human parent, so there is none in that training, during our present state of childhood on earth, by "our Father in heaven," which at once encourages profitable enquiry and represses impertinent curiosity; and which, while checking indiscriminate credulity, yet requires, in subjects beyond the reach of the learner's faculties, implicit faith on sufficient authority.

Those who profess, by simplifying and explaining the mysteries of the Christian religion, to make Faith easy, destroy in effect the very nature of it, considered as a duty; for there is surely no virtue in assenting to Euclid's propositions or anything demonstrable to the understanding. Such men in en-

deavouring to widen the strait gate, are guilty of much the same fault with those who turn aside from it in disgust. The latter will not believe what they find it impossible to explain; the former are resolved to explain what they find themselves compelled to believe.

The stamp and outer form of counterfeit and of genuine coin are alike—even *more* alike than two pieces of gold stamped differently; though, inwardly, the base metal and the gold differ in the real and essential point. And so it is with false and genuine faith. They are very much alike in outward semblance; but they differ in this all-important point—that false faith is a rash and unreasonable submission of the will and understanding to a *supposed* Divine authority; true faith is a deliberate and rational submission to the guidance of an authority, *proved* by sufficient evidence to be Divine.

He who believes only what he sees, and does only what his understanding pronounces to be reasonable in each particular command of God, has evidently no faith. One who on a dark night at sea fancies he sees land before him, while gazing on a fog bank, should at least not pretend to have as much faith in the pilot as one who believes on the pilot's word,



that the land is near, and does not pretend to see it. For "Faith is the evidence of things *not* seen."

Faith is, as some have justly expressed it, "the hand with which the believer lays hold on the free offers of Divine mercy." "By grace are ye saved through faith" is the language of the Apostle. "*Through* faith," not *by* faith; for it is plain that if the believer were saved, strictly speaking, by his faith, he would be himself as much his own saviour as if he were saved by his works. And faith must be both rightly directed towards the object which we have good grounds for relying on; and also must be a lively (*i. e.*, living) faith, bringing forth good works and necessary fruit.

The practice of Paul must be strictly conformed to, of "comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" and of remembering that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him; neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

To urge the use and advantage of reason in religious enquiry, is not necessarily to imply that there are no secrets in religion which reason alone cannot fully comprehend. As mere general intelligence is

not sufficient to give a full and sufficient appreciation of a poem, or a picture without artistical or poetical taste, so men of ordinary intelligence may understand the great outlines of a doctrine, but unless they possess devotional taste, it will be to them a mere outline, a skeleton: very correct, perhaps, but wanting life and animation. The secret which gives it animation—"the secret of the Lord—is with them that fear Him," and, unlike the artistical or poetical taste, which is not given to all, this fear of the Lord may be possessed by every man, in proportion as he himself desires it, in virtue of the gracious promise that He will "give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." "If any man *will* do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." . . .

Though the Divine dispensation of spiritual aid is no longer miraculous, the presence of Christ no longer visible, for we "walk (wholly) by faith, not by sight," still that aid is not less real, that presence not less abiding. The Spirit ever "helpeth our infirmities." Our Divine Master has promised to "come unto them that love Him and keep His saying," and "to manifest Himself to them." He speaks to them, though not in a literally audible voice. He leads them, not less really than of old, though not literally, by the

hand, for "as many," says the Apostle Paul, "as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." If we look earnestly, we shall see Him: if we listen attentively, we shall hear His voice.

It is clear to any one who seeks in earnest to be led by the Scriptures, that when our Saviour promises that the Holy Spirit, whom the Father should send in Christ's name, should teach them all things and should "abide with" them—"for ever,"—"that Spirit of Truth," whom, He said, they knew, "for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you:" these words of His are not to be explained as relating merely to a system of doctrines and motives,—to an *abstract religious principle*,—but to a real, individual, *personal* agent, operating on the minds of believers; which is called, amidst the diversity of operations, one and the same Spirit, not figuratively, as when we speak of the spirit of patriotism, the spirit of philosophical enquiry, and the like; but literally and numerically, one Being, even the one God whose temple is the whole body of the faithful; which temple they are warned not to "defile, lest God destroy" them. For, if any one could even so strain this last expression of the Apostle Paul, and likewise all the words of Christ Himself, as to interpret them into mere metaphor, it would

still be impossible for him to conceive a mere principle of action—a Christian spirit in that transferred sense of the word,—enabling Christians to work *sensible miracles*; and these we find distinctly attributed to the immediate agency of the Divine Spirit. And these sensible miracles served to prove, amongst other things, that the promised indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in His Church was not to be understood as a mere figure of speech, denoting their adherence to the doctrines He taught, and the possession of the inspired record of them, but a real, though unseen, presence, by His Spirit; not the mere keeping of His commandments through love for His memory, but a spiritual union with Him; at once the promised reward, and the bond and support, of that obedient love,—the effect at once and cause of our “keeping His saying.” “For if any man love Me,” said He, “he will keep My saying, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

The influence of the Divine Spirit which our Lord promised, is not to be understood as confined to the Apostles and other early disciples, or to such miraculous powers as were conferred on them. Would Jesus have said in that case, “I pray not for them alone, but for those also who shall believe on me through their word?” Or would Paul, when

writing to the Romans, who had at that time *received no miraculous gifts*, have said "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by *the Holy Ghost which is given* unto us : . . . "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," . . . "if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you ;" . . . "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His : " . . . "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit ?" "Repent and be baptized," said Peter to the multitude, "into the name (for so the word should be rendered) of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord your God shall call." The gift of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is held out to all who have been thus called ; *i. e.*, have heard the Gospel preached to them, and is as effectual for their private individual wants, as the miraculous powers bestowed on the Apostles, were for the wants of the infant-church. To each of *us* is promised, no less the far more important benefit of the inward comfort,—the guidance, the spiritual sanctification of heart, which every man needs, and of which every Christian is invited to partake. The necessity of miraculous evidences to establish our religion has ceased ; since enough evidence has been left to satisfy a candid mind. The gift of tongues is no

longer required, since ignorant fishermen are not (as then) called upon suddenly to proclaim the Gospel in distant lands ; but every individual Christian who comes into the world, being born of the frail and sinful race of Adam, has need of being "born again," as our Lord says "of water and of the Spirit, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven." And we have daily need throughout our lives of the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to know and love God, since "no one," says our Lord, "can come unto me, except my Father who hath sent me draw him." We all need His heavenly light to clear our eyes from spiritual blindness, and to enable us to see all things in their true colours, and shape, and magnitude. We all need His "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities," that we may "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and able to stand against the wiles of the devil." From all the delusions, in short, and from all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the Christian can only be preserved by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him ; which he has, therefore, as much need to seek, and may have as full confidence of obtaining, as the Apostles themselves.

One important distinction, with respect to the

Divine assistance and spiritual endowment between the Christian Church and the Jewish, is, that whatever sanctifying aid may have been supplied under the Old Covenant, it was no *part* of that *Covenant*;—of the Christian covenant it is. God the Holy Ghost—God manifest in the Spirit, was not the *permanent Ruler* of the former Church, as He is of the Christian Church. He is our Promised and Permanent Comforter; He is the “*promise of the Father*” sent that “He may abide with us *for ever*.”

The Apostles inferred this or that to be right or true from its being the suggestion of the Spirit as attested to them by miracles; we must reverse their procedure and judge anything to be the suggestion of the Spirit by *its being* right and true, evidenced to us to be so by the Scripture, that record of the dictates of the Holy Ghost. If our life and faith are agreeable to the Gospel, this is the ground of confidence that they are right; and if right, they must come from that sanctifying, and enlightening, and supporting grace, which alone can raise to life the dead in sin, and purify man's corrupt nature, and effectually open his eyes to the truth, and “strengthen the feeble knees” to walk in God's paths.

The miraculous gift was only the proof and pledge

of spiritual influence ; the seal and earnest that the treasure had been bestowed, and not the treasure itself. And as the blaze of the pillar which guided the Israelites in the wilderness, and proved to them the Divine presence among them, was withdrawn when they were sufficiently convinced of that presence, and, as it were, familiar with the belief that the Lord was among them as their Protector and King—the manifestation of “the glory of the Lord” being thenceforward enclosed within the Most Holy place;—so the outward and sensible marks of God’s presence in His Church were gradually withdrawn, when sufficient evidence had been afforded of that presence ; which is still not less real or less effectual than before ; and which is no longer miraculously displayed, only because it has been already sufficiently proved.

There is an opposite error to the looking for sensible demonstrations to the mind of being under spiritual influence. It is that of those who acknowledge in *general terms* the existence and the necessity of the ordinary operations of the Spirit, but explain them away in each particular case ; and thus completely nullify the doctrine. They allow that Christians are to expect the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost ; but each separate work in which this Divine



agency can possibly operate, being of course such as right reason would approve, they refer to right reason alone; and by this means they exclude one by one every possible instance in which the *ordinary* grace of the Spirit *can* operate; for anything which could *not* be traced to any natural cause, would clearly be miraculous. But a doctrine which is true generally, cannot be false in every particular instance. In fact, what we mean by the ordinary operation of the Holy Spirit, is His operation through second causes; His aid to our endeavours; His blessing upon the means of grace. We are taught to pray for our daily bread as God's gift, though it is not like manna showered miraculously from the skies; and every Christian thought, and word, and deed is no less "from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," though it come not accompanied with fiery tongues, and the "sound of a mighty wind." Its Christian goodness is the sign of its spiritual origin.

## V.

### ON THE APPEAL OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH TO THE AFFECTIONS.

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THE Gospel turns to its own gracious purposes all the tendencies of human nature that are not evil. It stops not the current, but directs it into the proper channel.

One of the most striking peculiarities of the gospel of the Lord Jesus is its continual appeal to the affections. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Here is the best principle set forth, and the best application of it; the purest motive and the most perfect practice. The love of Christ is the proper ground of our obedience; and our obedience, the proper effect, and the sure test, of our love for Christ.

Reason can no more influence the will, and ope-

rate as a motive, than the eyes which shew a man his road can enable him to move from place to place ; or that a ship, provided with a compass, can sail without a wind.

The apostle John, when he said, "No man hath seen God at any time," seems to have had in mind not merely the difficulty to such a creature as man, of making a being whose nature is so incomprehensible that our knowledge of Him is chiefly negative, a steady object of thought ; but also that still greater difficulty of setting his affections on this awful and inconceivable Being ;—of addressing, as a tender parent, Him who has formed out of nothing, and could annihilate in a moment, countless myriads, perhaps, of worlds besides our own ; and to whom "the nations are but as the drop of a bucket, and the small dust of a balance ;"—of imploring favour and deprecating punishment from Him who has no passions or wants as we have :—the difficulty, in short, of holding spiritual intercourse with One with whom we can have no sympathy, and of whom we can with difficulty form any clear conception. But the apostle adds, "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him ;" and thus seems to have conceived such a "declaration" of God as calculated not, indeed, wholly to remove



these impediments to love and devotion, but so far to moderate and lower them as to leave them no longer insuperable to a willing mind.

The Divine "Word was made flesh" to lead us to affectionate piety, and the manhood was taken into God to teach us Godlike virtue. The one purpose may be said to have been to bring down God to man; the other to lift up man towards God.

God sent His Son into the world to proclaim peace to all who should hear and accept His offers. He came to encounter and overcome Satan—to offer up Himself as a sacrifice—"the just for the unjust"—and to proclaim pardon, not as if sin were a light thing in God's sight, but as purchased by the precious and "innocent blood." He came to "bind up the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives;" and promised to come unto them that should love Him, and to make His abode in them by His Spirit; that they might be enabled to follow the bright example He had set them, and thus to live in peace with God—to become the sons of God, and after death to enter into His eternal rest; the reward which He, not they, had earned.

The burden of grief may, indeed, be lightened by

the sympathy of others ; but the burden of *guilt* can be taken off our consciences only by God's forgiveness. Men forget, that for bearing both burdens they have a great High Priest in heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, who "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows ;" upon whom "the chastisement of our peace was laid, and by whose stripes we are healed ;" who "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," having been Himself "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin ;" being subject to all the wants, infirmities, and temptations incident to His, and our, human nature. All this calls for our sympathy as well as reverence and gratitude ; and the affectionate attachment thus so naturally generated will adhere (if I may so express myself) to the divine nature of the Saviour also, and when we worship Him, though we worship Him not as man, but as God, still it will give an affectionate fervour to our devotions, to have an habitual remembrance, that this very God was also man deigning for our sakes to be "made flesh, and dwell among us," "taking upon Him the form of a servant, and humbling Himself even unto the death of the cross."

It seems to be commonly taken for granted that whenever the feelings are strongly excited, they are

necessarily over-excited ; it may be that they are only brought into the state which the occasion fully justifies ; or even that they still fall short of this. Stimulants are not to be condemned, as necessarily bringing the body into an unnatural state, because they raise the circulation ; in a fever this would be hurtful ; but there may be a torpid, lethargic disease in which an excitement of the circulation is precisely what is wanted to bring it into a healthy condition.

Men are not satisfied with pointing out to a young person the necessity of being diligent in his business, inasmuch as on that depends his subsistence, and all his hopes of wealth and distinction ; but they strive also to inspire him with a *love* for his employment—a *taste* for his profession, as the best safeguard against the many temptations to indolence and dissipation. Surely the path of Christian duty is not beset with fewer temptations, nor is it less necessary to engage the feelings on the side of duty, to fix the affections on the Redeemer.

No man would much prize a friend (indeed, he would be reckoned unworthy of the name) who felt no regard for him, but did him service merely because he perceived it was for his own interest. Nor will Christ accept this kind of service from His fol-

lowers. He requires them to give up their hearts to Him and to obey Him, not merely as "servants," but as "friends."

The language of promise and threatening—the appeal to the reason and to the interests of men—is not the prevailing character—not the general tone, as it were, of the discourses of Christ and His Apostles, when addressing *believers*. They hold out a nobler and purer motive. They chiefly insist on love towards Christ, not certainly as a *substitute* for obedience, but as the *foundation* of obedience—as the great principle, the main spring of Christian conduct,—they urge us to fix those warm affections which God has implanted in our breasts, and which were never meant to be rooted out, on the most suitable and noblest objects. "The love of Christ constraineth us," says Paul, and "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

Christ and His Apostles well knew that a cold address to the understanding—a mere chain of arguments—serves rather to make men acknowledge what they ought to do than to excite them actually to do it. It may lead them to *think* rightly about reli-

gion, but not to *feel* and *act* rightly. It is like the moonlight—clear, indeed, and beautiful, but powerless and cold; *their* preaching, on the contrary, was like the light of the sun, which warms while it illuminates, and not only adorns but fertilizes the earth.

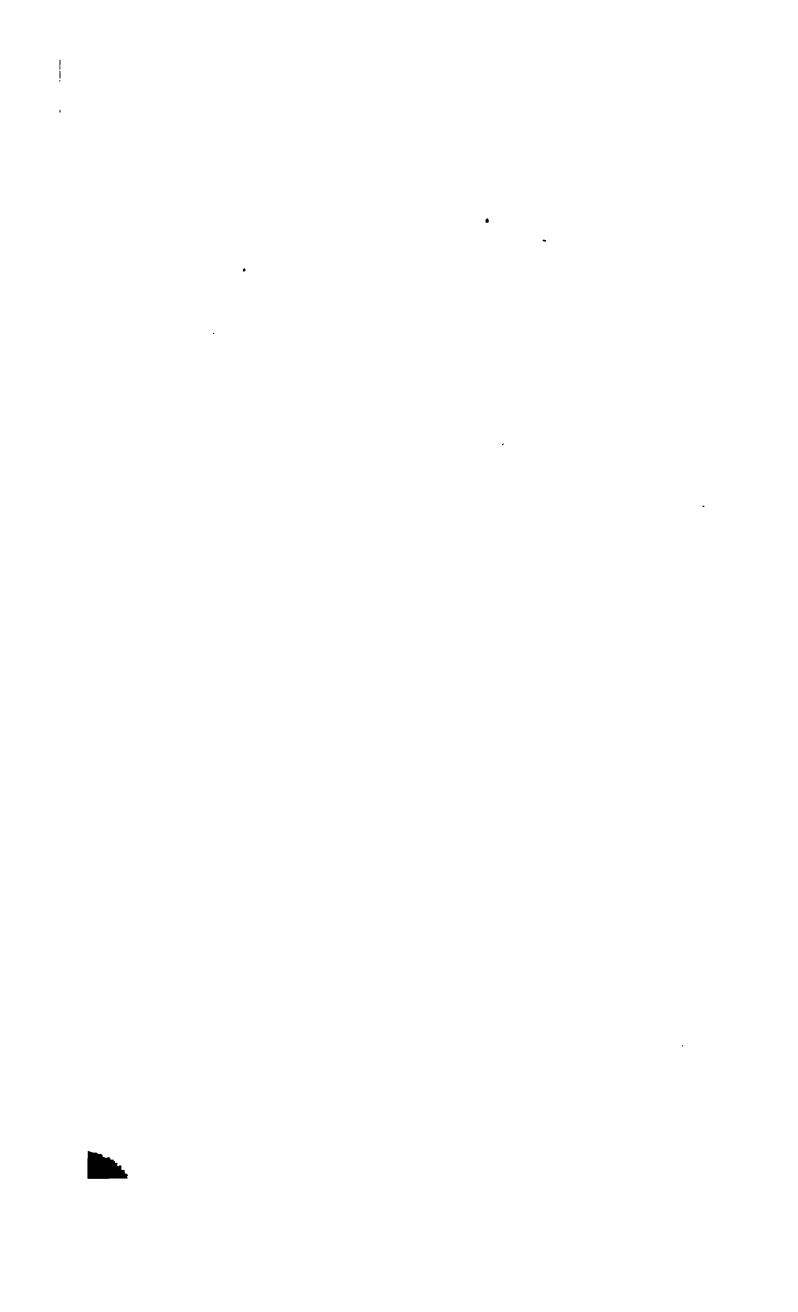
The object of friendship is not certain qualities merely, but a certain individual person. The cravings of an affectionate heart can only be satisfied with the *very person* on whom it is fixed. Therefore that peculiar characteristic of our religion which consists in its continual reference to *persons*, and especially to that Great Person who is the Author of it, rather than to abstract things, is eminently calculated to win over the affections, and to gain the heart. And strikingly is this characteristic exhibited by the Apostle Paul, whether in speaking of the Christian's hopes, or of the Christian's duties. If the latter be his theme, it is not of Christian virtue *in the abstract* that he speaks most often, but of it embodied, exemplified, represented, *personified* in Jesus Christ. He speaks of "walking in love, as Christ also hath loved us;" of "putting on Christ;" of "being buried *with Him* in baptism;" of "being risen with Christ;" "looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith," at every step. And on



the other hand he does not speak so much of eternal happiness *in the abstract* as of the happiness of an intimate union with our Great Master; to die is, with Him, to depart and *to be with Christ*;" after "having suffered with Him, to reign also *with Him*;" of "the crown of glory," which He, the righteous Lord, has prepared for all that "*love His appearing*;" and his encouragement to the Thessalonians is, "so shall we ever be *with the Lord*." And this tone is the more remarkable in the expressions of Paul, from the circumstance that he was not, like the other Apostles, personally acquainted with Jesus while on earth. Thus also the Evangelist John (as well befitted the beloved disciple) places both all Christian perfection in conformity to the pattern, and all happiness and glory in admission to the presence of our Great Master: "We know not what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; as much as to say, even the very hope of hereafter "being with the Lord," leads believers to conform themselves to the example of His purity: and the actual enjoyment of His presence will carry further and complete that resemblance to their Divine Master, which they are now, through the promised aid of God's sanctifying Spirit, striving after. And our Lord's own language is of the same tone: as the

motive He seeks to implant in the disciple's breast is, as has been said, love, gratitude and reverence for Himself; so the encouragement He sets before them is the hope, not merely of happiness in the abstract, but of intimate union and close intercourse with Himself: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "If a man love Me, he will keep My saying, and My Father will love him, and *We will come unto him*, and make Our abode with him." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will *come unto you*." "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

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